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Editorial

IT HAS BECOME a truism that the future of Africa is being decided now, and some may feel that in the context of events to come art and architecture may be questions of peripheral interest at best. And yet history gives evidence that the arts of all great nations were of major importance in their development and in the legacy by which those nations are best known to the world today.

In the evolution of the arts and architecture in Africa we of the West must heed the counsels of the Church and strive to create an atmosphere in which the African will eventually be in a position to solve his own problems without doing violence to or destroying those positive elements in his past which can be properly incorporated into his Christian life today. In these matters the supreme authority of the Church is wiser than persons who sometimes inflict their prejudices on an impressionable and malleable flock, often destroying those values which the African can bring to the solution of problems which deal with the far-from-peripheral domain of art.

In our previous issue it was noted that Africans, so far, have been denied the opportunity to study architecture and become active practitioners in their own countries. A considerable number of Africans have come to Europe and to the United States to study at universities, but few, so far as can be ascertained, have taken up the study of architecture. Business and the law have attracted the majority, perhaps because of their belief that prestige and attractive emoluments are more likely to

accrue from these professions. However, in view of the volume of building anticipated in countries that now seek independence, Africans may look to the day when architecture will be an honored profession. And surely their innate talents, in tune with the *mores* of their homeland, could bring to this evolution of art and architecture those intangibles which a Westerner would find difficult, if not impossible, to manifest in a creative manner.

THE PROSPECT of what may come from Africa in this field is an exciting one. Barely fifty years ago some of the great cities on that continent—for example, Ibadan and Elisabethville—did not exist. Yet today we can see there homes and office or government buildings that can hold their own with anything Europe has to offer. And since the “archeological” past is non-existent the architects of today, and those Africans whom we hope will succeed them, can work unhampered by false notions of tradition and nostalgia imported by the missionaries. There is now little excuse for continuing a procedure by which churches were designed and constructed largely with undoubtedly good intentions and at the same time with an indifferent professional competence and talent. That this has been the prevailing climate does not in the least detract from the magnificent work accomplished by the missionaries in fields peculiarly their own. However, there has been undoubted deficiency in an activity for which their studies and perhaps their inclinations had left them ill-equipped and unprepared.

IT IS HOPED that the articles and illustrations in this and the preceding issue of this quarterly will throw some light on these problems and hint at possible solutions fully in accord with the teaching of the Church and the importance of that beauty which the House of God should shed on all peoples. We are aware that a three-and-a-half months’ trip through the major centers of Africa is hardly sufficient to cover all evidences of present-day achievements, but we hope this report will bring to many a hint of that flowering of religious art we may expect from budding African nations, guided and aided in these formative years by European confrères fully cognizant of the wisdom of instilling in their friends a respect for their own traditions and a desire to absorb the best we have to offer.

Suggestions and corrections from old hands in the missions in Africa will be more than welcome, and might then be incorporated in another report to appear in a future issue of LITURGICAL ARTS.



We regret that credit was not given to *Worship* for Bishop van Bakkum’s article which appeared in AFRICA 1. This article appeared originally in the *Assisi Papers* number of *Worship* and were the official version for the United States. Father Godfrey Diekmann, editor of *Worship*, informs us that Bishop van Bakkum’s address was delivered as a part of the International Pastoral Liturgical Congress which followed the Missionary Congress.

An Eye for Beauty

MARGARET WEBSTER PLASS*

WHAT then is time?" said Saint Augustine. "If no one asks me, I know; if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not." The same might be said of beauty. Saint Thomas Aquinas's over-rationalized definition — "Beauty is that which, being seen, pleases" could cover the photograph of a beloved child or a platter of fried chicken equally well. It was no saint who told us "Beauty lieth in the eye of the beholder," but for the purpose of discerning the beauty in African sculpture, this definition seems best. It is most true if the eye be trained by some ethnographical study.

If you have in your house a treasured sculpture by a tribal artist, you will sometimes be asked "Please explain to me, why do you consider that carving beautiful?" This is not considered by your visitor, a compliment. He is simply astounded that you have actually paid money for an object that seems to him so evidently unskillful, so gratuitously hideous. When faced with such a question, it is usually best to change the subject, rather than make the obvious, the disgustingly arrogant answer, "I like it because I have spent more hours and days looking at African art than you have spent seconds."

African tribal sculpture cannot be enjoyed by the light of nature. But what art can be so enjoyed? Symphonic music, until heard over and over again, until dissected by the listening ear, the ear that can hear music, can be mere dissonance. The poetry of William Blake, at least the poems of prophecy, are only poetic gibberish until his symbolism is guessed. We laugh at the old cliché "I don't know anything about art but I know what I like," but who would say "I don't know anything about chess but I know what gambits I like?" The only way of learning to enjoy primitive art, tribal sculpture, the art of tribal Africa, is to spend a lot of time looking at it, and — best of all — handling it. Discovery of its beauty must be acquired with great patience, but then this applies to most forms of acute enjoyment. "Beauty lieth in the eye of the

beholder" could be expanded to say that the understanding and enjoyment of any art is no more than the capacity of the spectator or the listener to relate the work of art to his accumulated store of experience. Eric Newton, the English art critic, has added "Human beings continue to quarrel among themselves about what is, or is not, beautiful, rather than about who is, or is not, capable of recognizing beauty."

If the enjoyment of African art is no more than the capacity of the spectator to relate the work of art to his accumulated store of experience, experience means not only study in museums, study in libraries, or even in the field, but the habitual responsiveness of the eye in daily life. The Eye for Beauty is not the average eye. Most people use the gift of sight so negligently, except for such useful, if ulterior, purposes as avoiding a mud puddle, hitting a golf ball, choosing a tie of harmonious color, or wielding a lipstick. The artist, and the true *amateur* of art, are continually fascinated by the look of things. Early in the morning, in the garden, how beautiful the shiny and iridescent trails of the slugs who have nibbled our seedlings in the night! What Graham Sutherlands were composed on the British beaches, just after the war, by the grim and twisted barbed wire barriers! How delightful to the eye the composition of a beautiful room framed by a doorway! This disinterested delight in shapes and forms

and colors can, believe me, become one of the major rewards of living. It is easy to find beauty where the poets have told us it is found — in flowers, in a loved one's face, in a glorious sunset or a Grecian urn; but the seeing eye finds beauty everywhere.

AND SO with African art. Even if the seeing eye looks at it without knowledge of its particular stylization and symbolism, much of the beauty of the sculpture can be appreciated, just as we may be moved by the beauty of poetry read aloud in a language we do not understand.

African sculpture covers so much wider and more varied a range than our own art that generalizations about its aesthetics are practically impossible to make. No anthropologist has yet succeeded in mastering the iconography as well as the ideology of Africa, of West Africa, the sculpture-producing area of this great continent. And perhaps until this work is done, it will be very difficult for us to achieve real appreciation of much of its art. But at least we can look long and hard at the many good examples of this great art available to us in our museums and great private collections. We can try to acquire some ethnographical knowledge of it, and of what it means to the artist who created it, to his patron and to his society.

Sculptors, when asked the reason for their enthusiastic admiration for African art, will almost invariably speak of its directness, its "sculptural" quality. These qualities are not identical, but they are so closely related that one can scarcely exist without the other. The African sculptor, like any tribal artist, can, because he is bound by no naturalistic canon, convey his meaning or emotion by the *direct* method, by form and color and surface. He never requires, as William Fagg of the British Museum writes "the intervention of a quasi-literary filler, such as is generally found necessary in art, like that of classical or Renaissance Europe." And the African artist can convey emotion by means

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open to the sculptor, but not to the writer, by *sculptural* means. That a few African tribes have adopted a kind of naturalism in their art is not surprising, considering the great variety of African styles, ranging from pure abstraction, to cubism, to the realism of the marvelous sculpture of Ife, (pages 123 and 124).

IT IS ESSENTIAL to free ourselves from aesthetic preconceptions in studying this extraordinary period in the history of art. The symbolism of African sculpture, its imagery and stylization, are based on what might be called sculptural similes and metaphors. This *poetical* quality, defining poetry as stylized thought, can be almost as moving to us, looking at some great masterpiece of African art (page 124) as to a member of the tribe that produced it, if we can

clear our minds of the aesthetic canons and traditions of the art of our own culture.

In the field of aesthetics, it must be admitted that our missionaries — almost all of them, but most certainly excepting Father Kevin Carroll in the Yoruba country of Nigeria — however well-intentioned, have done far more harm than good. And the so-called African contemporary art, with its depressing uniformity all over Africa, is a tragic sequel to the detribalization of Africa, inevitable with the spread of our industrial civilization into that continent. The Negro peoples in losing their own tribal art have without being aware of it lost one of the great assets in life, along with the ancient, powerful and dynamic philosophy which inspired their genius.

ciple does not confine us to art of the past, and we can look to African building of the present.

Many influences are at work in the creation of a modern African style. In the last century slaves returning from Brazil after emancipation, many of whom were quite skilled artisans, imported a type of colonial rococo for dwelling houses. In more recent times pilgrims to Mecca and the Moslem world have introduced architecture in modern material with a North African flavor. Both these styles have made much use recently of traditional Yoruba patterns in the cast concrete balconies of these dwelling houses. Recently a few private builders have put up houses in a style influenced by the modern buildings going up in Ibadan. In public building Ibadan has adopted a contemporary style, which the University College, designed by Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry, has had great influence in popularizing with both African and European officials, since work started on it about eight years ago. (See illustrations on page 88).

The Building Problems of a Missionary Bishop

THE RIGHT REVEREND RICHARD FINN, S M A *

WHAT principles guide a missionary bishop in his building programme, and what difficulties does he meet? I can only speak for my own prefecture, and I hope this issue of *Liturgical Arts* will give us a wider picture of what is happening in other parts of Africa.

Politically Nigeria will soon be self-governing. This has been conceded by the British government, and therefore while the national mood is determined, there is no bitterness. Economically there have been tremendous advances since the last war, yet as the Honourable Raymond Njoku, Minister of Commerce and Industry, pointed out recently, the total income of the Nigerian government is less than that of some cities in Europe. Educationally the country is backward, yet recently free elementary education has been introduced into about half the country. There is no doubt that Nigeria will rapidly take its

place among the great nations of the world.

Nigeria has about one million Catholics in a population of thirty-two million, but they are unevenly distributed. However, the Church is firmly founded, as can be seen from the recent appointment of African auxiliary bishops in the archdioceses of Lagos and Onitsha. My prefecture of Ibadan is named after the rapidly developing capital of the progressive Western Region. The majority of our people live in the city of Ibadan, which is the largest city in negro Africa, numbering well over a million people.

In considering building, the important missiological principle that the art of the Catholic Church should be not a foreign import but indigenous, cannot now be questioned. But what does this mean in practice? There seems to be no developed architecture in southern Nigeria. The traditional building materials were earth, timber, and thatch, and even the palaces of the kings were quite unpretentious. However, the prin-

IN THE past the "Catholic" style has been a vague gothic or romanesque (at least in intention), but carried out with unskilled labor in crude brick, concrete block, timber-framed roofing and iron sheeting. Buildings were designed by the missionaries with the assistance where possible of friendly contractors or engineers. Lagos Cathedral was an ambitious, massive, reinforced concrete imitation of a gothic cathedral, a late example of the gothic revival. It was begun about twenty years ago.

We must remember not only the principle of indigenous architecture but also the architectural principles which demand a logical use of available materials, and that the building be primarily functional in relation to use, climatic conditions and the country, not merely a copy of an old style. Moreover, we must not forget either the people or financial considerations.

The Ordinary of a diocese quickly finds out that he is by no means free in his choice. He is limited by the skill of the local architects, supervisors, and workers. He must also cut his cloth according to his purse. Then the people's opinion must be respected, though we remember that they can be educated. That includes the foreign missionaries themselves, who are often suspicious of change, and for many sound reasons. However, missionaries are more easily

* Prefect Apostolic of Ibadan, Nigeria — a member of the African Missions Society.

converted to new ideas than many priests in Europe.

The people here expect us to continue to build in the style they are used to, yet they have accepted modern buildings without protest. An article in a local Catholic magazine attacked the African-style carvings and paintings in our University chapel as being pagan, but no one was unduly excited. The priests and sisters here now seem quite proud of the few new-style buildings we have put up (illustrations page 87).

However, a bishop is not always able to afford the services of a good architect, or even certain building components and materials. In Ibadan it is not economical, for example, to build in the attractive and suitable locally quarried stone. The old style of solid concrete or brick walls, with timber and sheet roof, can be set out and constructed under the supervision of an experienced priest with semi-skilled labor, and with a certain amount of success. But it is a different matter when it comes to the employment of more advanced methods of construction, where the services of an architect or engineer are essential. In Ibadan we have been fortunate to have had the advice of a good architect in the design and supervision of some buildings in contemporary style.

A further consideration is finance. Money is the root of all evil, but it is also a source of much good. Even if funds were available it would not be good to rely entirely on money from abroad. The local Catholics must be made to feel responsible for building their own churches. In the old type of construction the priest built as the people paid. They do not pay readily unless they see something actually going on, and they do not pay for work which they see has already been completed. So the priest builds slowly over the years in contrast to the smooth working of the building contractors' methods which involve the organization of many skilled workers and site operations, together with the high degree of supervision which modern building requires. It will be seen, therefore, that we cannot always build in the contemporary manner, even if we wished.

In the four years since this prefecture was separated we have been able to put up three contemporary-style buildings — a university chapel (designed by Fry & Drew), a major seminary, and a convent. We also have designs for the seminary chapel. We have also used the services of the architects in more con-

servative structures, which can be easily built under the supervision of a priest, and still be contemporary in feeling.

Some are of the opinion that modern design as we know it in Nigeria smacks of ostentation and luxury in the missions. It is not realized that the development of contemporary architecture is partly a response to financial restrictions and need not be more expensive than old fashioned building.

IT MAY BE thought that I have paid lip service to indigenous art, and have in practice made use of a foreign style of building. The truth is that we have built as the Africans themselves are building today, though we have gone further in the use of traditional art. While there is no logical African architecture we can follow, there are many beautiful crafts which can be integrated into modern building. The Society of African Missions established a center at Oye Ekiti in 1947 to develop the use of African culture in Christian worship. We have been able to use their craftsmen in the execution of the university chapel (illustrations page 87), and we are incorporating massive carved doors in the new parish church in the center of the town. Other crafts we have made use of are embroidery, leatherwork,

beadwork, and ornamental weaving. We could, however, carry the use of such crafts much further than we have done so far. Painting has given some difficulties as the Yorubas have not developed in that line very far. The few African artists we have are entirely European in outlook. The architects designed a large reredos for the university chapel, and one of our priests painted it in a style related to traditional painting (illustration page 87). He was successful to the extent that it was linked in the mind of the people with pagan painting and was even called "juju" painting by some. However, as he himself points out, to employ a foreigner to paint in an African style is only a stop gap solution.

As regards architecture and the liturgy we have done no original thinking. We know difficulties arise when architects feel themselves restricted by liturgical laws which they think are out of sympathy with their requirements. If they neglect liturgical law in their preliminary design, a lot of practical difficulties will arise later. It is necessary to insist that the architects take the liturgical laws fully into account from the beginning. Each to his own competence, and the results ought to be apparent in the next decades.

A Christian Approach to the Arts in Africa

JEAN-PIERRE GREENLAW *

IT IS NO exaggeration to say that the future of man depends very largely on the result of the impact of the Western world on Africa. Since Africa is one of the very few remaining sources of comparatively unspoiled humanity, the white man's effect on it and its reaction to his influence will constitute a judgment on mankind which will have far-reaching consequences for both races. Unfortunately, the contacts which date back to the time of the Pharaohs have not always been edifying. The abuses and excesses of the slave trade, coming from the East as well as from the West, took a heavy toll of innocent life which will take generations to atone

for in the face of the awakening of self-consciousness in the African. Perhaps the African's greatest gift to the future of mankind is his capacity to give back what, in the West, mankind has to a

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great extent lost — a capacity to *feel*; a heart, a human heart. For the African has a warm and generous nature, capable of hearing the most terrible injustices, sustained punishment, and degradation with a remarkable fortitude and cheerfulness which has defined centuries of abuse.

In spite of appalling discouragement, the African's vitality, as expressed in his sense of rhythm and color, is proverbial. It has replaced the folk-dancing of the West with its own dance music and popular entertainment. Whatever we may think of its intrinsic cultural value (and before passing judgment we should remember the social conditions in which it was born) we must admire its astonishing vitality and the creative effort of joy and humor which it represents. Such zest for life, refined and properly channeled for the glory of God may one day be permitted to give back to mankind that care-free and colorful "*joie de vivre*" which Adam's pride and lust for power and knowledge all but extinguished in the West.

The African is not, of course, completely innocent, nor is he by any means perfect. But poverty and close contact with nature have kept him relatively pure, and his atrocious sufferings and injustices in the past must have expiated many of his sins. When men come to appreciate the qualities of the heart and put them in their right relationship to those of the intellect, the moral stature of the African will grow to new proportions in the sight of many — as it may well already be in the sight of God.

Even if this interpretation is fanciful, it is likely to prove a more fruitful way for us in the west to view our position as educators or moral guides than by assuming an air of superiority. Our aim should be to keep the sources of human sensibility pure, to protect the African against himself and prevent his possible seduction by spurious elements in western culture.

THE PROBLEM of cultural education (especially visual culture) apart from expecting and fostering a blind imitation of the contemporary European pattern, has not yet been properly faced, let alone solved. Neither culture itself, nor the way to foster it, seems to be very clearly understood by us. It is often assumed that culture "just happened." But of the roots of culture, of its association with the "cult" as the etymology of the word shows, and its source and origin in ritual worship and

liturgy, there is little said. Until this is realized, however, and associated with an enlightened educational system, any cultural influence must be superficial and transient. The *creative* element, the action of the life-giving Spirit is wanting. Here then, is the Church's great opportunity everywhere and most certainly in Africa: to build a *truly Christian culture*, based firmly on the Rock of Christ and beginning with the liturgy.

Visual culture, architecture, painting and sculpture, and the arts of drama and the dance, is the common meeting ground of matter and spirit, body and mind. The act of adoration of God is the incentive that has brought forth the best feeling and noblest expression of the human heart and the greatest cunning art of the human hand. In this connection, Christianity has, aesthetically speaking, equalled but not necessarily excelled, the achievements of the East or of pagan antiquity. Today, alas, the general level of aesthetic expression in the Church is considerably below that of even contemporary pagan cultures.

At the present stage of African material development a practical form of education, such as God designed for His Son is most appropriate. His was a rural craft with a very particular significance: woodwork (probably allied with the other village crafts, of which Saint Joseph must have known a good deal, masonry and building, and possibly too, metal work). It is not unlikely that Mary too, occupied her fingers with needle-work, spinning and perhaps weaving. Our Lord's education was exceptionally *practical and local*, as well as religious.

Wood plays a special role in the creation, lying half-way between inert matter and animate life. The type-material of the vegetable kingdom with which can be associated other "vegetable" crafts, like basketry, mat and rope-making and thatching and all work in grasses. In this domain the African wood-carvers and basket-weavers have much to remind us as we fast forget the possibilities of wood, replacing it with plastics, the while pulping it into newspaper.

The liturgy makes much of our redemption by wood. The wood of the Cross especially, but also the wood of the Ark, the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple. In this age of steel and plastics, may we not need reminding of this central role of wood by a renewed attention to the great aesthetic possibilities of this material?

EDUCATION as an evolving science. Education as a science is comparatively new and still far from perfect. It is daily undergoing transformation. It is only of recent years that child psychology has permitted adults to revisit the scene of their lost childhood and thereby put themselves consciously in the position of understanding children. Teachers now have a chance of learning from the Christ-Child in everyone, the "*Puer aeternus*," in all of us, but they will find it "*par excellence*" in the child-like mind of the African.

Africa too is awakening from its childhood dream and passing into a period of adolescence. The west's adolescent mode of life today is formed in the educational systems which it imposes and which, almost inevitably, divide both the individual and society into two hostile camps, — of intellectuals and artists, and capital and labor; one corresponding to the mind and the other to the body, but neither to the whole man. To counteract this spirit, mankind needs a type of education which develops the *whole* man, body and soul. Such a system would aim at an education of the senses, as well as the mind, especially the sense of *touch* which many generations of artificial surrounding, clothing and town-dwelling, has blunted in the west. The human organism was designed to live *un-clothed*, or at least very lightly clad, in close and continual contact with the elements. Centuries of life in clothes, houses and cities, have estranged many generations from the intimate contact with natural substances and their taste is thereby vitiated. This cannot be said of the African of whom millions, even today, pass most of their days very slightly clad. That is why Africa may be a good setting for any re-education of mankind which takes the *body* seriously into consideration. The sense of touch is not limited to fingers; it is transmitted by the whole epiderm, a sensitive part of which is the sole of the foot. Walking barefoot is an experience which too few Europeans know and which all Africans know well. And the African's strongly developed sense of form and rhythm may be simply due to the fact that he still lives for the most part in continual close physical contact with the elements.

The re-education of the sense must, in order to unite the split personality of man, be supplemented by a rediscovery of the significance of the forms around him, natural as well as artificial; to be seen as expressions of something *other*

than themselves — as symbolic expressions of the Creator. The key to this lies in Christian doctrine and theology and its expression in the liturgy.

The way for this rediscovery has already been prepared in two ways. First, the modern schools of painting and the sciences have both reduced the visible world to a complex of "abstract" forms and laws which man organizes either *artificially* for his own use and contemplation or, they exist *naturally*, created by God to teach us about Himself. The second element in this preparation is the two thousand years of significant form in Christian culture. The complete symbolism of the universe is also present in the liturgy and scripture. An analysis and teaching of these two aspects of symbolic form, the one natural and the other supernatural, when given to a people as artistically gifted, as relatively pure and aesthetically unspoiled as the African, might well result in a rebirth of Christian culture shorn of its merely European, Mediterranean, Nordic expressions. It might than be embodied in one that is far more *real* and *universal* because it would be based on pure nature and pure revelation. Practically, this means an education which is completely *unified*, and at the same time ritual and liturgical in the widest sense of the word.

Such, then, is the beginning of a Christian approach to the arts in Africa. It involves a new point of view and one based on the potentialities and gifts of those we presume to educate and lead.

THE NEED FOR A CENTER TO DEVELOP MISSIONARY ARTS IN EUROPE AND AFRICA.

TO IMPLEMENT the suggestions offered above there is a need for a center through which material can be collected and exchanged to build an ade-

quate art and architectural tradition in Africa. Much material is already available in photographs and models in many ethnographical museums in the world and local archeologists are most helpful and knowledgeable on local crafts and design. But it is plain that some kind of *specialized* knowledge is required to unite local forms with liturgical requirements. A *missionary art and crafts center*, somewhere in Africa, with contacts in other parts of the world and in Rome, with Propaganda Fide, is necessary. Priests and Brothers and laymen with talent could study there and some might even specialize in native crafts and building methods or materials. Every mission area should have its own *artist-craftsman-architect*. His work would be in the nature of designing, guiding and organizing the local crafts in the interest, not only of the material requirements of building but, through them, of assuring the healthy development of the soul. Art forms could thus become a very powerful adjunct of the work of verbal teaching, speaking as they do, silently, persistently and subconsciously. Their stabilizing and harmonizing effect on the mind could be invaluable.

I would recommend three stages in the formation of such a policy and center.

First — the granting of a roaming commission to one or two suitable missionaries to collect data and examples in sufficient number to form a center of instruction with two poles; one in Europe, presumably in Rome or near Rome; the other somewhere in Africa, under the aegis of a bishop who is aware of the importance of the work to be done.

The *second* stage would be the formation of the first center, either in Europe or in Africa. This center should be under

the patronage of Saint Joseph and modelled on the Holy Family and the workshop at Nazareth. The staff and students would live a simple craftsman's life — at least for the period of their formation and the work would include a study of the philosophy and theology of form. It should also include ethnography and symbolism in design. All of the hand crafts should be represented and building in simple, natural materials; avoiding cement and other industrialized materials — not as bad in themselves but as dangerous in their tendency to remove natural color and texture and without any character of their own.

The *third* stage would be the founding of a second center for a mutual exchange of students: white missionaries studying in Africa and Africans in Europe for a period of several years during which they would objectively study each other's heritage of visual Christian culture. The course of study would be essentially double to begin with. At this stage, the possibility of utilizing modern building materials and methods might also be studied and a modern Christian art, chastened by renewed contact with nature, might arise.

Such a project need not be expensive but if men are not prepared to make some sacrifice for beauty they cannot yet understand the Beauty of Holiness.

Finally, *the matter is urgent*. Every day industrialism and commercialism make fresh progress in the rapidly decreasing areas of virgin nature. Unspoilt nature is the material cause of the new creation — embodied first in the Blessed Virgin herself; nature continues to beget men who may become "Christs by adoption." Surely here is the germ of a new order of Christian charity, the Redemption not only of mankind, but through and for them, of nature herself.

Notes on Open-Air Churches and A Dinka-Luak-Type Church in the Southern Sudan

JEAN-PIERRE GREENLAW

IT IS surprising that more open-air Christian worship is not done in Africa, a land where the heat inside any but the loftiest and most spacious buildings can be oppressive. Afternoon and evening worship indoors, in Africa, is

most uncomfortable. In this respect Islam, having evolved in hot countries, has something to teach us.

Symbolically, open-air worship can extend the notion of the church as a symbol of the universe to the point of

actuality. The universe itself is the abode of the Almighty God — "Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei;" the roof is the sky — there are no walls but trees and earth. The need for a homely feeling of enclosure and the practical necessity to

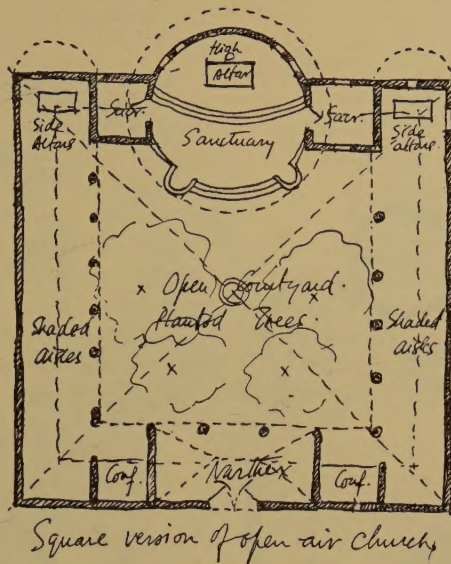
close the church at night, however, demand some kind of walled construction. The sketches accompanying these notes show an idea which is capable of infinite variation and is most elastic and in true African tradition. Extra chapels, stores, confessionals, cribs, and rooms, can be added at will, and the whole perimeter is expandable.

Once the bogey of "permanence of construction" (that spectre of modern urban life) is laid, man is free to live and breathe in a more direct contact with the environment for which he was born — the fresh, open air. The bogey is one of our own making. No primitive or mediaeval structure, except the Church, was ever meant to be permanent. The reasons for elasticity and adaptability and economy in a life susceptible to change were fully appreciated.

The great variety of African hut designs, a few only of which are illustrated here, could make this basic notion extremely effective in combining local styles with a church pattern which is recognizable as such — African in style, and economical. Bishops would be relieved of many financial headaches, and the faithful would not associate good design and beauty with expense. Unfortunately much of the harm is already done. So much prestige is attached to expensive permanent structures that mud and thatch buildings are considered "unprogressive" and retrograde.

THE Dinka-Luak-type church in the southern Sudan. The church illustrated here expresses that attitude to a native culture which aims at building up from the point reached in its development before the impact of foreign enterprise. There is no introducing of needless secondary, foreign, material influences. This should have the effect of enabling spiritual differences and affinities to be expressed more clearly. Differences in techniques may become necessary owing to increased size. Special objects, like candles, chalices, and so forth, should be borrowed from African sources, as well as Western ones.

It is only possible to build like this when a culture has not been irremediably impoverished by foreign influences and the substitution of new technical methods based on expensive and often unsuitable imported materials. Once these have become established, the society is doomed to a long and laborious process of re-education in taste, which will take many generations to achieve. If this degeneration could be avoided, a primi-



*Square version of Open Air Church
— Ideal in tiled roof construction
Also possible in Pan (God forbid!)*

tive society could be brought to a high degree of Christian maturity, with a minimum of growing pains. Instead of feeding the African gargantuan portions of the tree of knowledge, since he must eat of it (in order to share our own civilization which is based on it) let us of the West who are Christians at least give it to him in digestible doses.

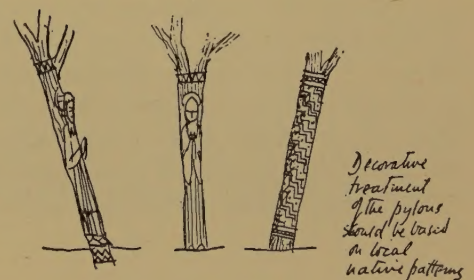
The structure itself is taken from the fine cattle byres, or "luaks," built by the Dinkas of the southern Sudan to house their sacred cattle. These byres can house up to forty head of cattle. Large, thatched structures are not uncommon in Africa, and are often most imposing and satisfying to look at and live in (see illustrations on page 112). A village church need be no larger than this.

In the luak, the roof supports lean outwards. They are not vertical. This outward thrust gives the roof a bell-like curve which is characteristic and graceful. In the design illustrated there are six central supports (there could be four) which should be forked in order to support the roof better. The branches might even be cut off after erection and

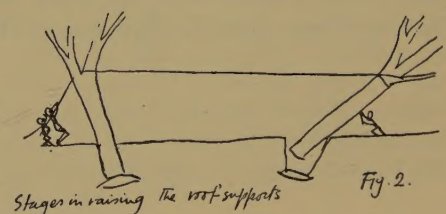
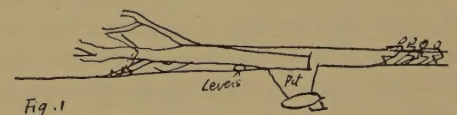
the fixing of the roof hoops and timbers to the thatching.

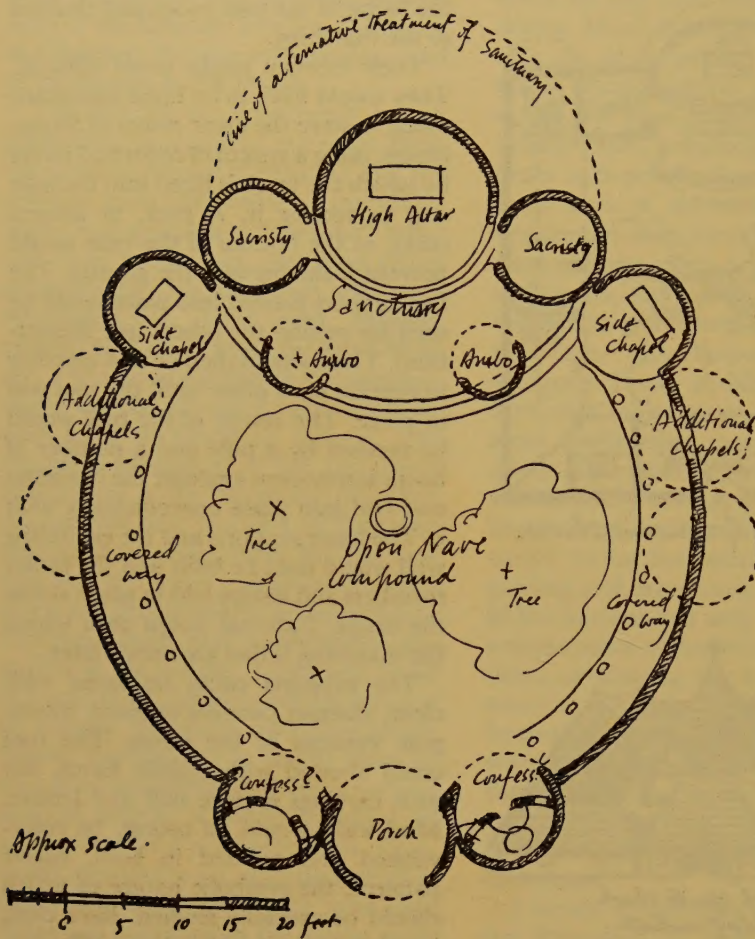
Their erection might prove difficult. They would have to be lifted into place much as were the great stones of Stonehenge, using a system of ropes and levers by which the truck is lifted into the hole dug to receive it. A rock, or several rocks, at the bottom of the hole would prevent it sinking into the ground. The first support hoisted into place could be used for raising the others (see illustration). These would then be tied together to support each other until the roof was in place. The center of the roof would be marked by a pole and a number of hoops interwoven amongst the branches and tied into place concentrically with it. The lesser supports and the encircling wall would then be built and the radial members and rafters laid in place across the hoops. External hoops onto which the thatching is tied are added later.

The supports could be carved with clear, abstract patterns or giant, totem-pole versions of the saints. The roof could abound with angelic forms, but such carvings require skill and leisure. Mud walls would, of course, be color-washed and painted in bold, native patterns, the symbolic nature of which should be carefully studied. Bark cloth hangings, too, could be very effective. The floor should be of beaten earth, covered with sand or strewn with grass and renewed every week. Rush mats could also be used.



All this carving is best done with axe or adze





Plan of "Open-type" African church.
Based on typical African compound.



Small open-air
church based
on Nigerian type of hut



Large Open-Air church
based on Lotuka-type huts
(S. Sudan)

"Once the bogey of 'permanence of construction' (that spectre of modern urban life) is laid, man is free to live and breathe in a more direct contact with the environment for which he was born—the fresh, open air."
From Jean-Pierre Greenlaw's text on page 111.

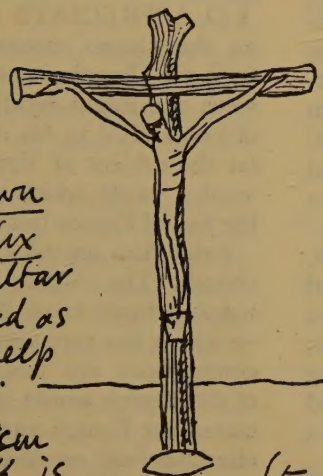
ROUND THATCHED "DINKA-LUAK" TYPE CHURCH.

1. HIGH ALTAR.
2. SANCTUARY.
3. SACRISTY.
4. Gt. CRUCIFIX.
5. NAVE.
6. AISLES.
7. GALLERY.
8. SIDE BARRIERS
9. SEATING
10. CONFESSIONALS
11. NARTHEX
12. STEPS TO GALLERY.
13. AMBO.
14. MAJOR TRUNK SUPPORTS
15. MINOR SUPPORTS

Approx Scale in Feet.

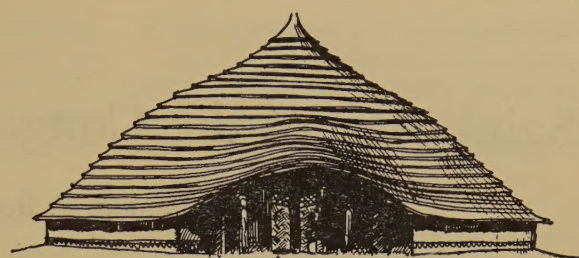
6' 9' 12' 18' 24'

CONSTRUCTION: Sun-Baked Earth walls Colour-washed & decorated. Thatched roof.
Timber supports (carved) Bamboo + palm gallery & other constructions.



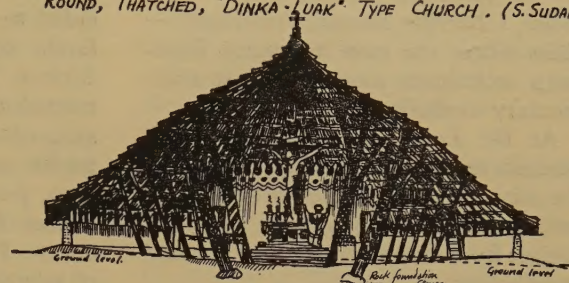
*Rough-hewn
Great crucifix
over main altar
could be used as
a pylon to help
raise others.*

*The symbolism
of this work is
significant & could be used to teach the builders
the profound truths of their faith!*

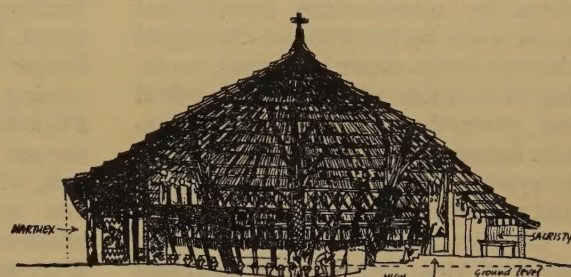


ELEVATION - Front, facing E. ↑ PORCH or NARTHEX.

ROUND, THATCHED, "DINKA-LUAK" TYPE CHURCH. (S. SUDAN)



SECTION A-A" N to S.



SECTION B-B" W to E

"In the luak, the roof supports lean outwards. They are not vertical. This outward thrust gives the roof a bell-like curve which is characteristic and graceful. . . . The supports could be carved with clear, abstract patterns or giant, totem-pole versions of the saints. The roof could abound with angelic forms, but such carvings require skill and leisure." From Jean-Pierre Greenlaw's text on page 111.

NATIVE designs should extend to ornaments, vestments, and the church furniture. Once it is realised that *permanence of structure is not an unqualified virtue*, there is much to commend a wooden building. The renewal of parts such as thatching every three or four years is an inducement to care and a measure of the community's vitality and love of its church. It spreads out expenditures over many years instead of demanding a large initial sum. It also provides continual local employment "tending the house of God," and how

clean and fresh it looks each time it is done! A brand new permanent structure tends to look well at first and becomes shabbier and shabbier as time goes on. And it, too, requires costly upkeep and repair.

Finally, the symbolism of the building should not be lost sight of. In the one illustrated here, which has not been worked out very far along symbolic lines, one might mention: 1. It is founded on rock. 2. It is made of wood, which is the material of the Redemption, the Tabernacle, the Temple, the

Cross. And our Lord was a carpenter's apprentice. 3. It is circular in plan, i.e., heavenly, infinite. (The square is the symbol of earth.) 4. The number of pylons may be symbolic — twelve apostles; four evangelists, etc. 5. Christ is at the center (with a central altar if the liturgical difficulties can be overcome).

The baptistry, the side chapels, the belfry could all be added either in adjoining structures connected by covered ways or, as in permanent buildings, as apsidal additions on either side of the high altar.

Saint Ann of the Congo—Brazzaville

THE REVEREND P. BURETH

FRENCH Equatorial Africa — country of contrasts: Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, Libreville, Bangui, Fort-Lamy — cities where the most advanced European techniques meet the most rudimentary methods of construction.

At the Lycée of Brazzaville black students study mathematics, philosophy, the sciences, while at the port of debarkation, under heavy guard, will land natives from Oubangui accused of ritual cannibalism.

Contrast again between the tar-covered avenues of Brazzaville, bordered by ultra-modern homes, and paths made by the pygmies (Babingas) through forests where huge trees, reaching to a height of over two hundred feet, screen the rays of the sun. Civilization has not yet been able to penetrate everywhere, for the country is immense and nature still crushes man.

Contrast again from the religious point of view, between the Christian priesthood of the native clergy whose studies are as intense as in Europe, and the witchcraft, fetishism and superstition which still hold a number of the *evolués* (educated Africans) in thrall.

But civilization is on the march, as indicated by the struggle of the races, the distrust, the legitimate demands of people to take their rightful place in the life of their country — claims sometimes unjustified or exorbitant, indicating a crisis of growth. There is great vitality, which runs the risk of becoming a devastating torrent unless held in check. But above the quarrels, the hatreds, the anxieties, above Brazzaville, where the two civilizations meet — the European and the African — the church of Saint Ann on the Congo rises majestically, serene, harmonious, and beautiful.

THE CATHEDRAL of the Sacred Heart, situated near the Relais Hotel, on the heights which dominate the European city and the Stanley Pool, was for a long time the only parish of Brazzaville. The Christians of Bacongo and Poto-Poto came to mass there; but between 1930 and 1940 the two African cities developed to such an extent that

Bishop Biechy found it necessary to create a second mission center. He decided to open this new mission at the limits of European Brazzaville and African Poto-Poto. The task was entrusted to the Reverend Father Moysan, who, a good Breton, placed the parish under the protection of Saint Ann, patroness of Bretons and sailors; Father Moysan in turn entrusted his curate, Father Lecomte, with the duties of selecting the architect to design the future church.

Roger Errel, a French architect, in Brazzaville but a short time, was selected. Having escaped from the Dunkerque inferno in 1940 and reported missing, Errel succeeded in reaching England, and then West Africa. Although a Protestant, he accepted the task, which he accomplished to perfection and without remuneration. In addition to the plan for the church, Errel designed the large stadium located near it. The entire project constitutes a harmonious human ensemble.

The project proved to be difficult, even gigantic. The tourists of 1957 had no idea, when they admired Saint Ann on the Congo and the Eboué stadium, that in 1940 this site was no more than an empty lot covered with brushwood and a few trees, around which flowed a small river.

At the time of the conference of Brazzaville in 1944, which transformed the *Empire Français* to the *Union Française*, the Eboué stadium was opened by Général de Gaulle, in the presence of Governor General Eboué. Only the foundations of Saint Ann then emerged above the ground. But since that fateful day the work has progressed slowly.

To have undertaken such a project at a time when the entire world was at war and when French Equatorial Africa was separated from France represented a challenge — it may even have seemed an unreasonable challenge then. To build brick arches to a height of seventy-five feet, using labor barely qualified for the work at that particular time, was a problem, since the African a straight line is a mystery. Tools were

lacking. The first hammers were forged from pieces of steel no longer wanted by the station master. At times rope was used instead of nails in the construction of scaffolds. The giant cranes which make it possible to hoist material with ease and dispatch were conspicuous by their absence. Buckets, emergency pulleys and rope replaced them, and tons of brick and stone were hoisted in that primitive fashion.

Bricks — there were 2,500,000 laid! And it was impossible to buy them — funds were not available. A brick oven was set up by the missionaries, and two bricks were sold to pay for the third, and so on.

The exterior is of stone, extracted from a quarry on the banks of the Congo. The roof is itself a work of art. The tiles, of emerald green ceramic are manufactured at Aix-en-Provence; pale green in the early morning, with gold overtones; emerald green late in the morning; a dazzling mirror at noon; turquoise blue in the evening; and a scintillating silver in the moonlight.

TO APPRECIATE what Saint Ann on the Congo means to Brazzaville, from the Christian and human point of view, one might recall the admonition of Louis XIV to his minister, Colbert, on the subject of Versailles: “. . . I want a castle which will not only be the *past* of France but also her *future*.”

Saint Ann on the Congo is a parish church. The African Christians who worship there know little beyond that — with a few rare exceptions. To them comparisons are lacking. The design of the church would be out of place in one of our French provinces, just as are churches built on African soil are mere pastiches of European architecture.

The arches of Saint Ann recall the huts of the Tchad region, and its curves remind one of the branches of palm trees (see illustrations on page 89). To really appreciate this building one must have seen it, and even then it is difficult to decide why Saint Ann on the Congo finds itself at home at Brazzaville. It carries out perfectly the union of European technique and African spirit. It is in this sense that the church is a symbol of the ascent of the African towards a reasonable adult civilization. The social status of the African, his garb, his religion, his language, may break down under the impact of European civilization. They do not know how to understand their own personality. They have but one desire — to be like us, to copy

us. This means the death of the African soul, and its replacement by a caricature of European civilization. That, indeed, is the present tragedy.

Commerce, mathematics, industries are universal; temperament, soul, and culture are born at home. The Christian faith is universal; its methods of expression are not universal and never can be. That is why Saint Ann on the Congo is and must be for the people of Central Africa a school, a program for the future. The great cathedrals in Europe are the fruit of many centuries of Christian civilization. Saint Ann on the Congo is a beginning, a seed. We do not know now where we are going or what we will accomplish in the Congo. If the program we have just outlined is not respected we may well court complete failure.

POTO-POTO, African suburb of Brazzaville with a population of 50,000, has too many bars; wine flows in abundance, prostitution is well organized, concubinage and irregular marriages rampant. One does not want to be bound in any way. Which will prevail? Order, discipline, and work, or disorder and vice? If the latter, it means the progressive disappearance of the African, who will give place to others who are stronger!

Saint Ann is there, beautiful, dominating, giving silent testimony to all people, asking them to base their ideals on Christianity without doing violence to the soul of Africa. That requires strength of character, and even bitter sacrifice.

It is said of the cathedrals of the middle ages that they were built by the faithful. But good will and faith can never replace the science of the architect, the art of the sculptor, or master mason or master roofer. One may have heard of thousands of pilgrims on foot carrying stone, sand, scaffolding. But it would be simple-minded to imagine a cattle merchant, an army commander, or a lady today handling a trowel or doing manual labor. In our time cathedrals and churches are built in perhaps less glamorous fashion; the faithful give their contribution in money, which becomes the wages of the specialists.

Gifts of material and transportation have considerably diminished the cost of the building of this church on the Congo. In a year the roof will be completed. The belfry, to rise to a height of two hundred and seventy feet, is yet to be erected, and awaits a generous

donor. The Christians of Brazzaville, who up till now have not faltered in their efforts to construct their beautiful church, would be happy if the Christians of the United States came to their aid in brotherly love.

A DEDICATORY ODE FOR
THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT ANN
OF THE CONGO

Translated by Sister M. Madeleva

Black Mother, black Mother, Grand-mother, with your two hands lifted over Africa,
Black-visaged Mother, praying over this dark continent, this great, somber land, this world as yet untouched by grace,
Just where the Congo River cuts it in two like a mango,
Black Queen of our hope.

At the very heart of this continent — the Great Bear and the Southern Cross responding each to each —,
In the roar of a river dishevelled in cataracts,
In that prayer as yet unformed, that petition as yet infertile,
In the creation that moans and knows not yet that it awaits
You to conceive the Mother of Grace.

Around you are the silence of night and the silence of death,
The uninterrupted silence of the enormous burden of vegetation,
The uncut forests, the enclosures of tropical bind-weeds and the immobility of body on body,
From which emerges beneath the heavy tropical skies,
A single silver angel, a kapok tree.

Silence . . . and suddenly the cry of a male panther,
And the tam-tam. The night pants for breath and parts like a rut. . . .

And the tam-tam. The women sob with fear. The man panther is in the street. To his witchcrafts the earth consenting and accomplice, offers itself,
The earth widowed and without a prayer.

Black Mother, lift up your hands over this continent possessed,
It is the tam-tam. . . . The flesh howls in its delirium, the flesh howls.
The women mew for fear like hyenas, they whine in every nerve.
Great pulpous flower, the tornado has barred up the gray skies of iron,
Beat the tam-tam of despair.

Mother, lift your hands, O, first bearer of Grace upon this earth,
And who comes but now from the obscure centuries of waiting,
O mother of Mary, first bearer, first mother.
See in these peoples of Africa a sorrowing patient multitude.
Lift it up with your prayer.

And peace descends upon the continent, one star shines through the mist.
The jasmine trees milk-white and embalming gold purify the night.
The terraces of laterite are violet in the moonlight.
The tam-tam is silent, the women sleep, and upon the quiet river a pirogue glides noiselessly.
The pirogue of hope, the pirogue of prayer,
Heavy with the future holy Marys that will be born of you, Mother Saint Ann,
Cathedral in labor, granary of our harvest in the germ, cellarer of grace, high upper chamber.
And over the immense continent like the murmur of the grinding of grain,
I hear the souls who lift themselves up to pray.



Drawing by Rita Ham

The Growth of an Indigenous School of Religious Art in Africa

MARGARET TROWELL *

THE SCHOOL of Fine Arts of Makerere College (Kampala, Uganda) is part of the University College of East Africa. As such it is a secular body and has amongst its membership both Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian students, as well as Moslems. A diploma of Fine Arts is awarded, comparable in form with that of the schools of art in Great Britain but with a content which is carefully chosen to stimulate the growth of indigenous art rather than to foster a completely Western tradition. The present writer has been privileged to play a part in the development of this school from its beginnings over twenty years ago, and some account of the growth of a tradition of religious painting and sculpture within the school may be of interest to readers of this journal.

When I first arrived in East Africa nearly thirty years ago there seemed to be no indigenous painting, practically no sculpture, and little of worth in the way of local crafts. Art was certainly not a school subject, for the mission schools were struggling to bring the first elements of education to a primitive people. Yet it was in those first few months that I was given a glimpse of the value of trying to develop some kind of religious painting that would really speak to the people as did the painting of the middle ages in Europe. My first pupil was a young school-master who came to my house and begged to be taught to draw as the Europeans did. He spoke no English and we had no common language, so I pointed out the story of the prodigal son in a Swahili New Testament and signed to him that he should draw that. A truly primitive effort resulted, which started with the prodigal son going off

with his share of the family wealth — axes, goats, cooking pots, gourds of beer, and the rest, and ended with the fatted calf being ceremoniously slain by suffocation as was done for the local sacrifices of the spirits. Shortly afterwards I got another gem, with Our Lord dressed in a red fez and khaki shorts, carrying an attaché case with the initials J C on the side; and I began to realize that our type of religious picture spoke in a foreign language to these people, and that somehow they must be helped to express themselves freely “in the vernacular.” When the School of Art came into being and our students began painting, first in a completely free and unsophisticated way, and later with more skill — though often with less pleasing results — as their general educational level rose, religious pictures were painted as naturally as those on any other subject. I rarely suggested the subject matter, and big game hunting, beer parties, or scenes from the life of our Lord were equally likely to be produced. As time went on certain doubts and difficulties began to arise, and both the students themselves and the European missionaries, Protestant and Catholic, expressed doubts as to the propriety of painting our Lord black. In some cases doubt was a mild way of putting it.

To all I explained that I did not think there was anything irreligious in an African painting a black Christ and black angels and so on; and that as a matter of fact the same sort of thing had been done by artists all down the ages, for Christ was beyond all limitations of race or tribe. I showed them Italian, Flemish, Indian, and Chinese religious paintings, and explained that He was no more one of these than He was an African, and yet in a deeper sense He belonged to all. Most students expressed great relief when they felt that they might paint Him just as they visualized Him, others said that their mental picture was so conditioned by the paintings and statues on which

they had been brought up in the churches and schools that they could not now imagine Him in any other way. But slowly the opposition died down, and it is rare now that the Africanization of a scene by an African artist is criticized.

IT IS difficult to sum up the characteristics of these young modern African painters. Their work has little in common with African traditional art; this is inevitable because they live in a semi-modern, Westernized world. But as far as religious art is concerned, apart from technique, I think they have a certain approach which is their own. Few Africans will appear to have a mystical approach to religion. Their representation of the Christ is truly a Very Man of Very Man, but fails completely to suggest Very God of Very God. This is a distraction to many Europeans who feel the representation of Christ as a slightly pompous well-fed-middle-class chief to be improper. “Surely,” they say, “you could have made Him look more worthy of our worship and adoration, even if you had dressed Him as a humble peasant?” But this attitude of ours frankly puzzles the painters. How else could they have emphasized His importance? Of course it is asking a lot of any young student painter, of any great artist for that matter, to represent Christ in a manner that is at all adequate. But I fancy that the matter goes deeper than that. The idea of the Incarnation is not difficult for the African. In the pagan world it happens on a lower level all the time. Every stone or tree, every snake or wild beast, may contain some spirit or other, and the gods and ancestors return to live again in whom they choose. No one knows clearly who may be so possessed, for it is not obvious to the casual observer. It is not obvious because the idea of moral value is not connected with the incarnate spirit. For the young African artist the idea of God Incarnate in Christ is a perfectly natural conception. But although he knows theoretically that God — and therefore Christ — is perfect goodness, the idea that this quality should be visible in his painting is beyond him. His conception is inadequate and must surely grow, but even now he has perhaps something to teach us. Such a matter-of-fact acceptance of the imminence of God is surely a very real contribution to our doubting, puzzled world, even if it is an incomplete one.

* Mrs Trowell studied at the Slade School, London, from 1923 to 1927. She went to Africa in 1929, and after a number of years of amateur interest in African art was appointed Curator of the Uganda Museum from 1939 to 1945. To Makerere College from 1936, since when it has slowly grown into a full blown school.

IN AFRICA painting and sculpture should surely play as important a part in the teaching of the Church as they did in Europe in the middle ages; for as has so often been said, painting and sculpture are to the illiterate as books are to the literate. Perhaps, just as in Byzantine painting a rigid iconography bound the artist to use the authorized symbols for the doctrines set forth, so the artist of today should be asked to conform to similar rules; but apart from that he should be encouraged to express what he feels in his own way. Nineteenth century sentimental realism has no special religious sanction, yet it is this which only too often is impressed upon him as the only true religious art.

Here in East Africa the painting of murals and altar pictures by our students and ex-students is beginning to be accepted in both Catholic and Protestant churches. During the last year we

have had two specially interesting commissions. One is from the Protestant church, to paint a fifty-foot mural in a new church at Fort Hall in Kenya which is being built to commemorate those who were killed by the Mau Mau. This is to take the form of a series of panels illustrating the life of our Lord. The other, in the Catholic cathedral of Rubaga, at Kampala, is the start of a big scheme of murals which will eventually, we hope, fill the building. This last is to be the work of Brother Francis, a young member of the Order of Brothers of Christian Doctrine, who has been studying in the School of Fine Arts for the last four years, and who is one of the best African painters we have yet produced. He has a great sense of vocation concerning his work, and I have every hope that he will be, he will play a memorable part in the teaching and beautifying of the church.

porary astronomical observatory in Cape Town. It was he who first observed the compass variation at eleven degrees thirty degrees west and for the first time fixed the geographical position of the little city at forty degrees thirty degrees east of the meridian of Ferro! This unexpected complaisance towards a Roman Catholic order from whose influence the Protestant Dutch had undergone some more than depressing experiences under Spanish rule, is an interesting historical fact, from which some unexpected deductions might be drawn.

Anglican missionaries arrived at the Cape during the eighteenth century, followed in the nineteenth by Roman Catholics and numerous Protestant bodies. An Anglican episcopal see was established in Cape Town in 1830, and in 1840 the foundations of a Roman Catholic church were laid in the same city.

Today, South Africa contains members of practically every known Christian denomination, as well as large communities of orthodox Jews, Hindus, and Moslems. At the last census of 1946, 54.2% of the European population belonged to one or other of the three sects of the Dutch Reformed Church; 16.1% were Anglicans, and 5% Roman Catholics. The Asiatics are predominantly Hindu, with a fair proportion of Moslems, mostly of Malay extraction and resident at the Cape. As for the native (African) population, no figures are available. Many of them are still pagan. Most of the Christians are probably Anglican, as Anglican missions have been active here since very early days, and a certain number are Roman Catholics. Many more subscribe to various local denominations whose names, doctrines, ritual, and standing are rather undefined, although their members seem to be devout and sincere Christian people.

IT WILL BE evident, even from this brief survey, that in the past art in the service of Christianity has played a very minor part in the pageant of South African life. Calvinistic doctrines, to which most South African Christians subscribe, have always made a cult of austerity and forbid the use of pictures and sculpture as stimuli to the devotion of its worshippers; while those Churches, such as the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican which, unlike the Dutch Reformed Church, regard the beauty of art as an essential part of

Religious Art in South Africa

DEANE ANDERSON *

ANY CONSIDERATION of the question of religious art in South Africa will most usefully be prefaced by a reminder of the shortness of the country's history.

South Africa, as a Christian country, is three hundred years old. Cape Town, the mother city, was first established by the Dutch East India Company as a refreshment station on the long route to her Eastern possessions. The first Dutch settlers in 1652 brought with them memories of religious persecution in the Netherlands, which had won independence from Spanish rule only four years before their landing at the Cape of Good Hope; and it is an ironic fact that

the particular form of Calvinism they brought with them — embodied in the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) — celebrated its own supremacy in a new continent by the exercise of an immediate discrimination against other religious bodies. When the French Huguenot settlers began to arrive in 1685, they were forbidden to practice their own Lutheran faith, and this ban was maintained for over a hundred years. In 1714 a law was promulgated forbidding the use of any religious books except those authorized in Holland. In 1742 a German Moravian missionary was forced to leave the Cape for baptising Hottentots. It was not until 1792 — one hundred and forty years after the foundation of the colony — that slaves professing Christianity were admitted to the full fellowship of the established Dutch church.

In the light of such denominational intolerance (which, it is only fair to remember, is by no means exclusive either to the Dutch Reformed Church as a body or to South Africa as a country), it is curious to remark that as early as 1686, Governor van der Stel allowed a Jesuit, Father Tachart, to erect a tem-

* Deane Anderson, whose family settled at the Cape of Good Hope over one hundred years ago, is mainly of Irish ancestry. He was educated in England and has travelled widely in Europe and the Middle East. He returned to settle in Cape Town in 1947, after serving six years with the Royal Air Force (Fighter Command). He is now lecturer in the Faculty of Fine Arts and Architecture, University of Cape Town; art critic to Cape Town's oldest newspaper, *The Cape Argus*; painter, poet, and broadcaster. He lives in a self-designed house on a hillside in the Cape Peninsula overlooking a vast panorama of sea, plain, and mountains.

divine worship, are fighting a perpetual financial battle and divert such space funds as they can collect towards missionary activities and towards providing a weather-proof roof over the heads of the congregation.

Nor, for that matter, has there been, until very recently, the slightest inclination on the part of any church authorities to sponsor vigorous, living, or creative art. The visual devotional equipment of the ordinary Catholic (I used the word not in its narrow, but in its wide, historical sense) church in South Africa is an aesthetic disaster. Timid and derivative architecture, mass-produced images from sordid "repositories" in Europe, commonplace altar appurtenances and tasteless vestments, reflect a threadbare convention entirely unworthy of the worship they are intended to serve and beautify.

It is a tragic situation; particularly as those known in South Africa by the negative title of "non-Europeans" (denoting Africans, Asiatics, and those of mixed blood), and who even in the 1946 census outnumbered the white population by 5 to 1 — the disparity of numbers is now considerable more — have themselves worthy art traditions and are extremely sensitive to beauty of color, texture, and fine craftsmanship. There is no doubt whatever that their acceptance of the beauty of the faith would be considerably stimulated if the externals of that faith were clothed in the artistic integrity and beauty which it demands and deserves. Art, after all, is a strong magnet in the hand of a missionary; and good art is the strongest magnet of all.

South Africa today has a living, vigorous, and individual art to offer. The Church has no possible excuse for lamenting lack of available talent. But before examining the contemporary situation, it is perhaps relevant to recall very briefly the very slow development of creative art in South Africa.

ITS EARLY history is a record of engraved legend. Before the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was a land where anything might happen — a land where "the Noble Savage," superbly plumed and armed, hunted fabulous birds and beasts in a setting fantastic as a fairy tale. The next phase was one of romantic topography. In the eighteenth century visiting artists from England, Germany, and Holland presented in more plausible fashion their versions of the traveller's tale. They anchored,

sketched, marvelled, and passed on. On their return to Europe, they exhibited and published. Europe was still amazed and incredulous at these records of a weird continent, where birds were taller than men, tortoises more crabbed than Voltaire, and where savages more naked than Adam disputed a wild landscape with Dutch housewives in twenty petticoats. French comedians playing de Beaumarchais's "Barber of Seville" in an elegant theatre and German Moravian missionaries building garden cities for Hottentots with thighs almost equine in size. Art boggled at such fantasy. The eighteenth century scene in South Africa provided the civilized world with a strip cartoon whose matter was so fantastic as to make a secondary consideration of the manner of its presentation.

In the nineteenth century, the topographer still reigned as king — but it was a more chastened topography. The English had arrived. Nonsense was discouraged. Extravagance was out of fashion. Slavery was suppressed. This century produced the first two national artists of South Africa. Thomas Baines (1820–1875), artist-peripatetic to the *Illustrated London News* and comrade to Livingstone on many of his Central African journeys; and Thomas Bowler, protégé of an ancient English family teaching art to schoolboys and amateur enthusiasts in Cape Town, kept art alive in the mid-Victorian doldrums. Examples of their work, needless to say, now command very large prices as "Africana."

None of this, of course, was really serious art. By 1900, art in South Africa still consisted of faint and ladylike echoes of Victorian recipes for "doing" sky, sea, or mountain. Photography had arrived and the great days of the art-science of topography were numbered.

But a change was to come with the new century. As might be expected in a country where brilliant light and color play an important part in the visual scene, the first influence to be felt was that of Impressionism. But, even then, the artist was still observing the African scene and the African people quite objectively. It was a nostalgic art, and art of the colonizer refusing or afraid to adopt the art traditions of the country he rules. Even as late as 1910, when the twin Colonies and twin Republics fused into one and formed the Union of South Africa, any suggestion that there was real artistic merit in a Bushman painting or an African carving would have been met with ridicule. In any case, so bold an assertion was never made.

TODAY an entirely new spirit has grown up in South African art. The "primitive revival" which, in the last decades, has directed the artist of every country to seek inspiration in the sincerity and directness of pre-history, of primitive peoples, and in the art of the child, has found fruitful soil in South Africa, where superb examples of ancient painting of the Hunting Age lurk under every rock shelter, where the Bantu arts of carving, basketwork, weaving, and beadwork still maintain the integrity of their long traditions, and where even in the landscape, living fossils grow and strangely blossom. An intense interest and concert with the art idiom of Africa is at last compensating for three hundred years of neglect, and as will be seen in the illustrations (pages 126 and 129), continues to fuse with the traditions of Western Europe to form a new and individual art language.

South Africa, even with its small population, has a larger percentage of practicing artists than any country in the world. Many of them are mediocre performers and many are frankly amateur; but since the Union has entered the international arena, South African artists have exhibited regularly at the Vienna Biennale since 1950, and for the first time this year at Sao Paolo. The interest shown in her art by international juries is a sufficient indication of its growing quality.

One of the signs of the sincerity and emotional vigor of South African artists is the concern shown by many of them with the inspiration of Christian iconography. In so brief a review as this, it is not possible to present a balanced picture of national achievement in this genre. The main cities are a thousand miles apart, and the writer, living in Cape Town, was unable to collect illustrations from several important artists in other centers — artists as a class being notoriously unwilling to answer letters! — but there should be sufficient here to prove that in Preller's luminous symbolism, Irma Stern's emotional intensity, van Essche's sombre dignity, Lipshitz's sensitivity and tenderness; in the inventiveness of Shephard and the direct statement of Krenz, there is a body of great talent which only awaits imagination and courage on the part of Church authorities and worshippers to canalize into the active service of Christian worship. When we link this fact with a realization of the vast resources latent in the arts and crafts of the African peoples, the moral is evident.



The Visitation
by Sylvestre Kaballa.
Is this not in the
great tradition of
"interpretation"?

In 1944, a French artist from Brest, Pierre Romain-Desfossés, arrived in Elisabethville, in the Belgian Congo, and founded a studio which later became the Academy of popular congolese art. He, like Father Kevin Carroll, in Nigeria, respected and guided the innate talent of his pupils and the result (as shown here) indicate the direction in which art in the Congo might function for the greater glory of the House of God.

ELISABETHVILLE BELGIAN CONGO



The Crucifixion,
by the same
artist



Recently completed United States Consulate
General in Leopoldville, Belgian Congo.

Inner court

UNITED STATES CONSULATES IN AFRICA

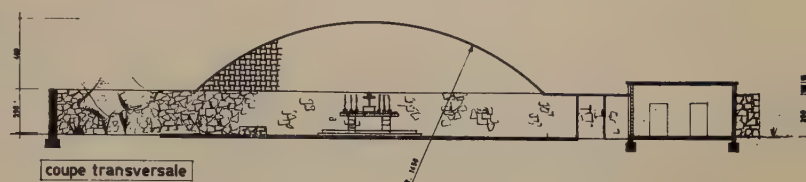
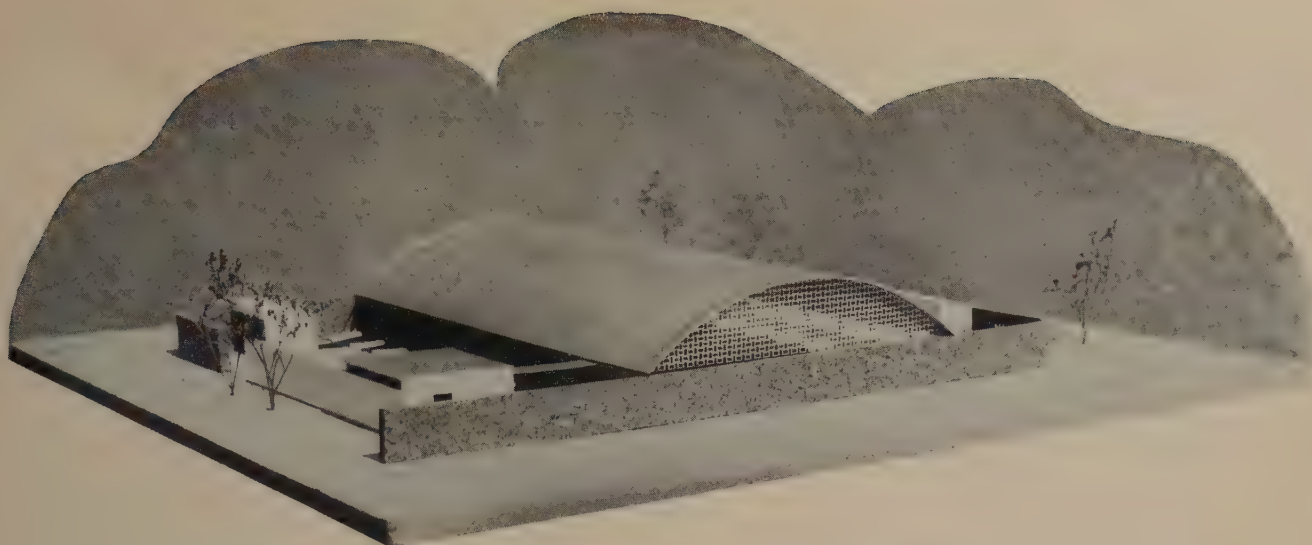


Consulate General office building, Lagos, Nigeria.
Weed, Russell, Johnson, associates, architects.

It is pleasant to pay a well-deserved compliment to the officials of the Department of State responsible for the design and building programme of embassies and consulates throughout the world. The board of consulting architects has been a distinguished one and the results of their advice and deliberations for Africa, as illustrated on this page, can show the way for missionaries anxious to emulate this degree of excellence and appropriateness.

Consulate at Dakar, Senegal.
Moore and Hutchins, architects.
George Pellissier, associate architect.

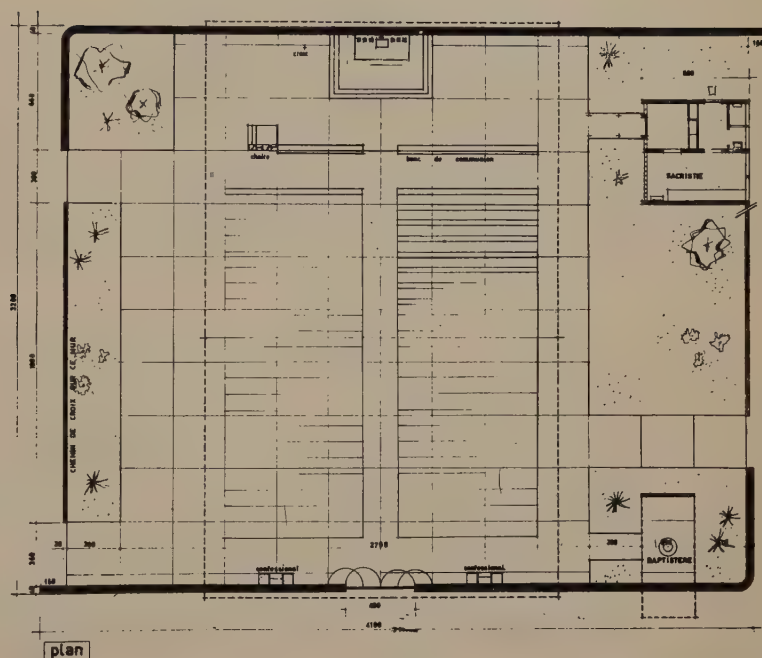




Project for a small church in the
"native" cities planned by the
Belgian government.

USUMBURA RUANDA-URUNDI

The plan of this church incorporates
much needed elements for tropical countries—
for example: a free and open space,
partly covered, which allows for shelter if
needed but also allows the people
to circulate without the hindrance of our
western regimentation.



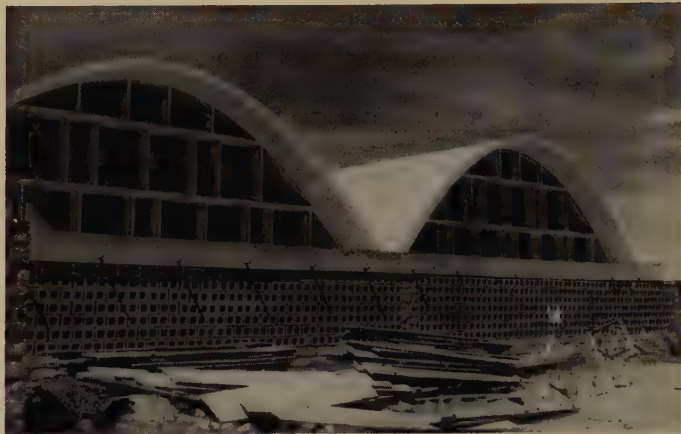
Design for a church for the
Cité Katutu, at Bukavu.





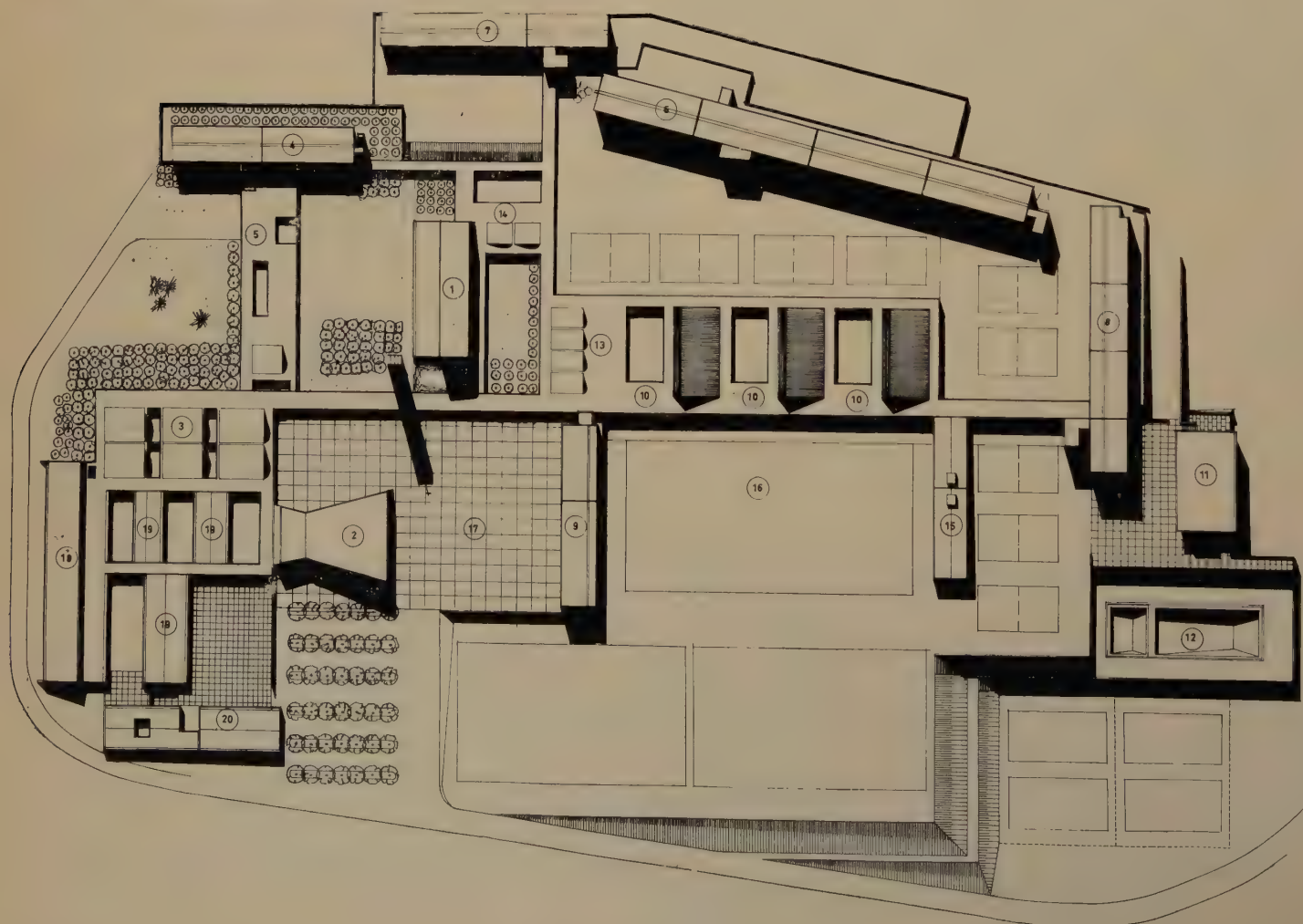
USUMBURA

A college conducted by the Jesuit Fathers, magnificently situated high above Lake Tanganyika. Roger Bastin, architect.



A completely integrated institution where the buildings so far completed are unhampered by stylistic considerations; they are reasonably functional, with color playing its part to produce a fascinating "African" complex.

1. Chapel 2. Auditorium 3. Refectories 4. Priests' residence
5. Administration and reception 6, 7, 8. Classrooms 9. Science section
10. Study halls and parlors 11. Gymnasium 12. Swimming pool
13. Library for the public 14. Sacristy 15. Hospital
16. Stadium 17. Entrance courtyard 18. General service area
19. Central control area 20. Workshops



This plan, elevation, and sections of the proposed chapel of the interracial college at Usumbura, Ruanda-Urundi, show clearly the approach which seems wise in the emerging climate of architecture in Africa.

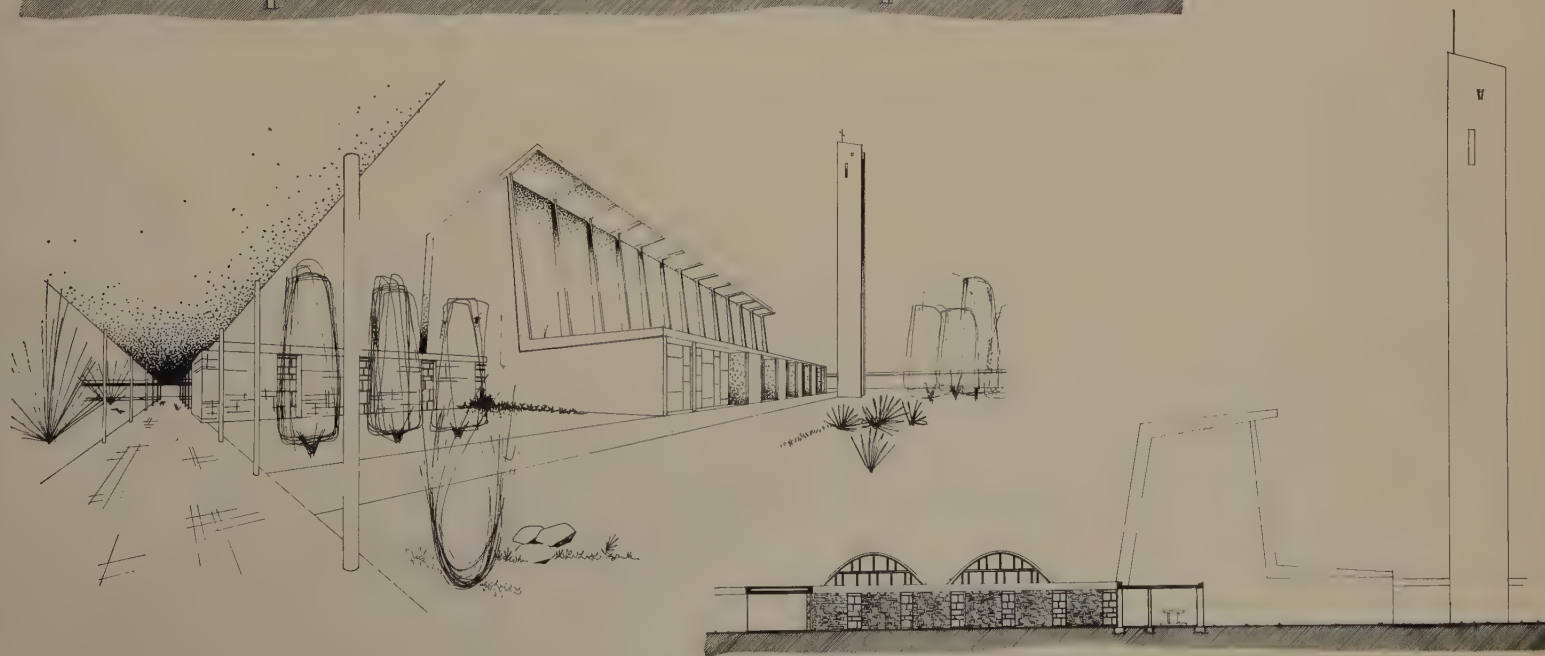
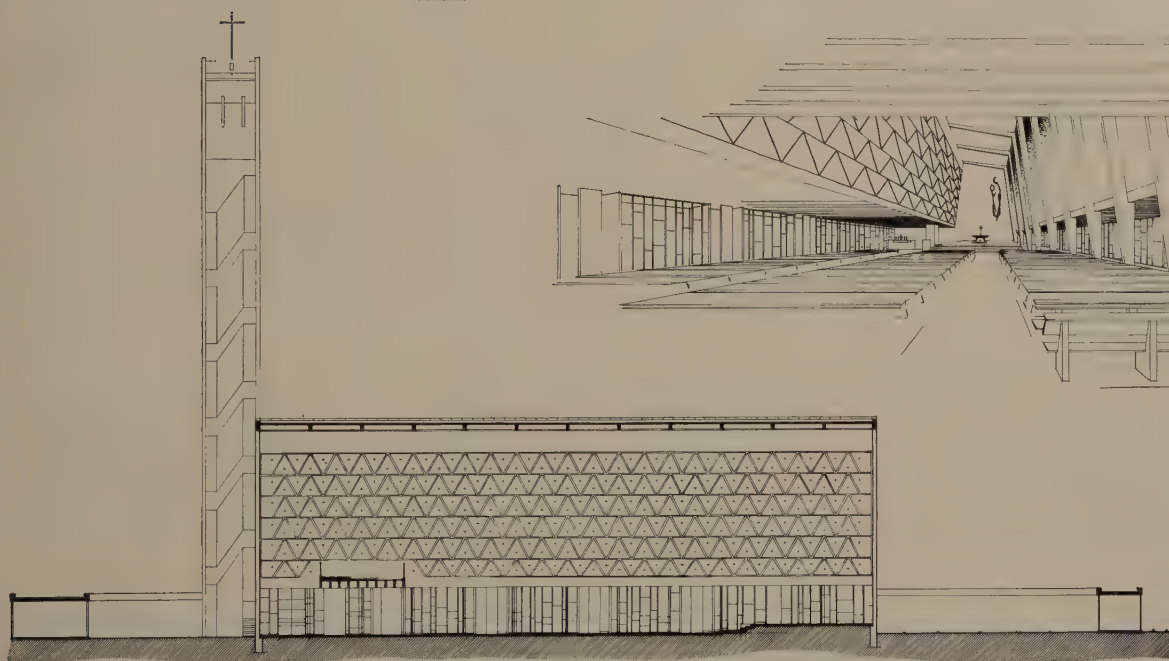
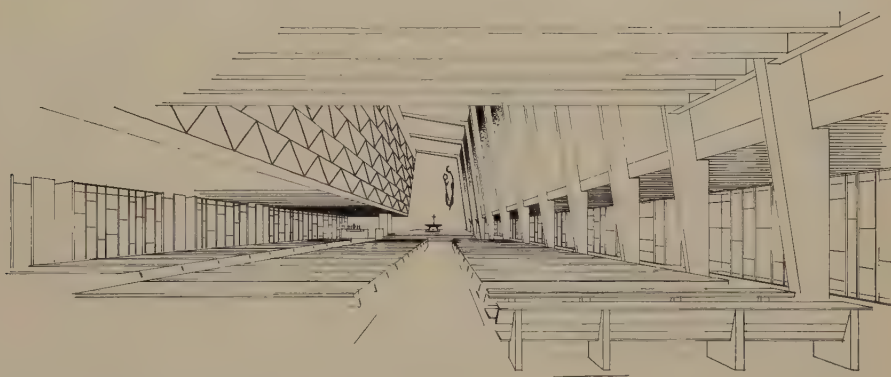
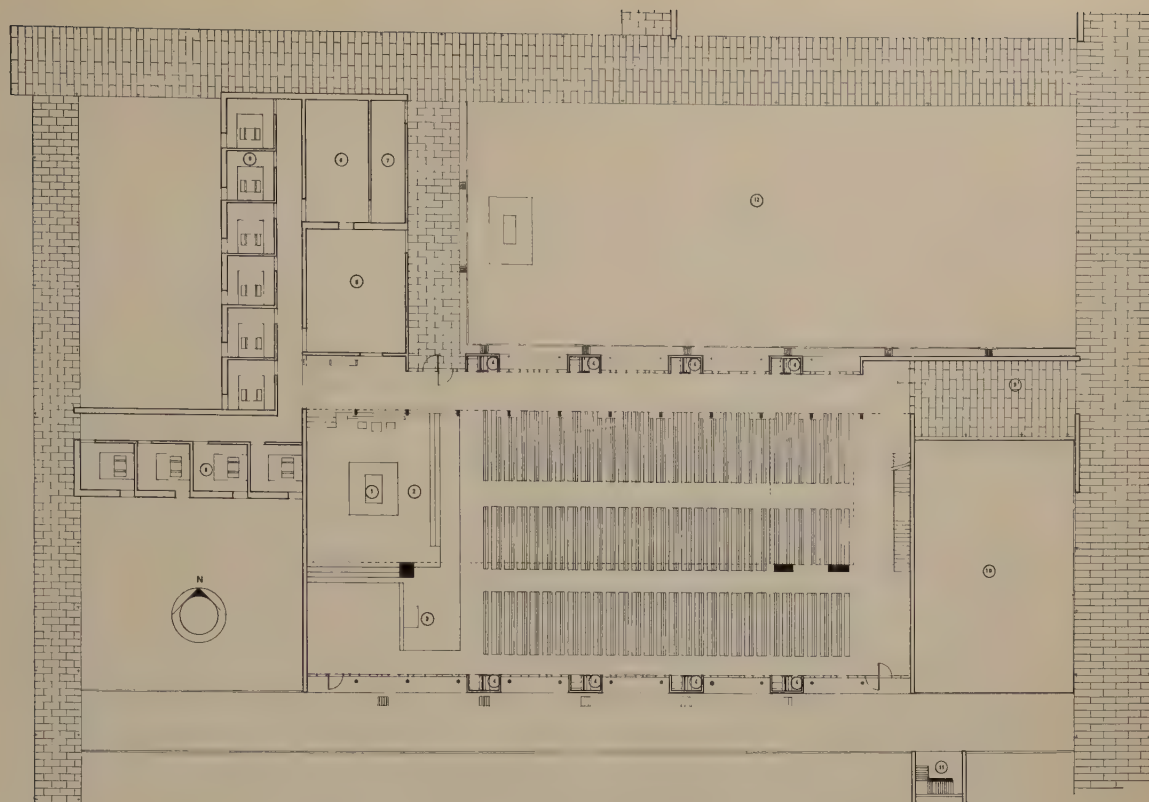






Photo
British Museum

Bronze head from Ife, Nigeria. In the British Museum.
(See Leon Underwood's book on "Bronzes of West Africa")



Wooden mask from the Baule of the Ivory Coast. From the Webster
Plass Collection. The British Museum.

Photo Soichi Sunami



NIGERIA

A double ivory gong from sixteenth century Benin.

An unusually poetic conception and one of the
most beautiful works of art to come from that
materialistic and war-oriented mediaeval empire.

Collection Webster Plass.

Photo Eliot Elisofon

◀ Terra-cotta head, recently excavated at Ife. One of the
most beautiful examples found to date.



MAKERERE

The University College of
East Africa

KAMPALA

UGANDA

(Upper Right) The Nativity, by Serruga.
(Above) The Last Judgment, by Brother Francis.
(Left) The Day of Resurrection, by Charles Sekintu. All these artists are of the Ganda tribe, Uganda, and students in the school of Fine Art of Makerere University College. (See Margaret Trowell's article on "The Growth of an Indigenous School of Religious Art in Africa", page 116)

BELGIAN CONGO

(Left) Scenes from the Life of the Blessed Virgin. (Lower left) Palm Sunday, by Ferdinand Mbambu. (Below) The Blessed Virgin, by Benjamin Mensah. All are students in the Ecole Saint Luc, Leopoldville. In time, opportunities for these young artists to secure commissions should become more and more frequent. The center statuette, in brass, dates from the end of the sixteenth century and was found near Kimpangu.



Photo H. Goldstein



Photo Gavaert

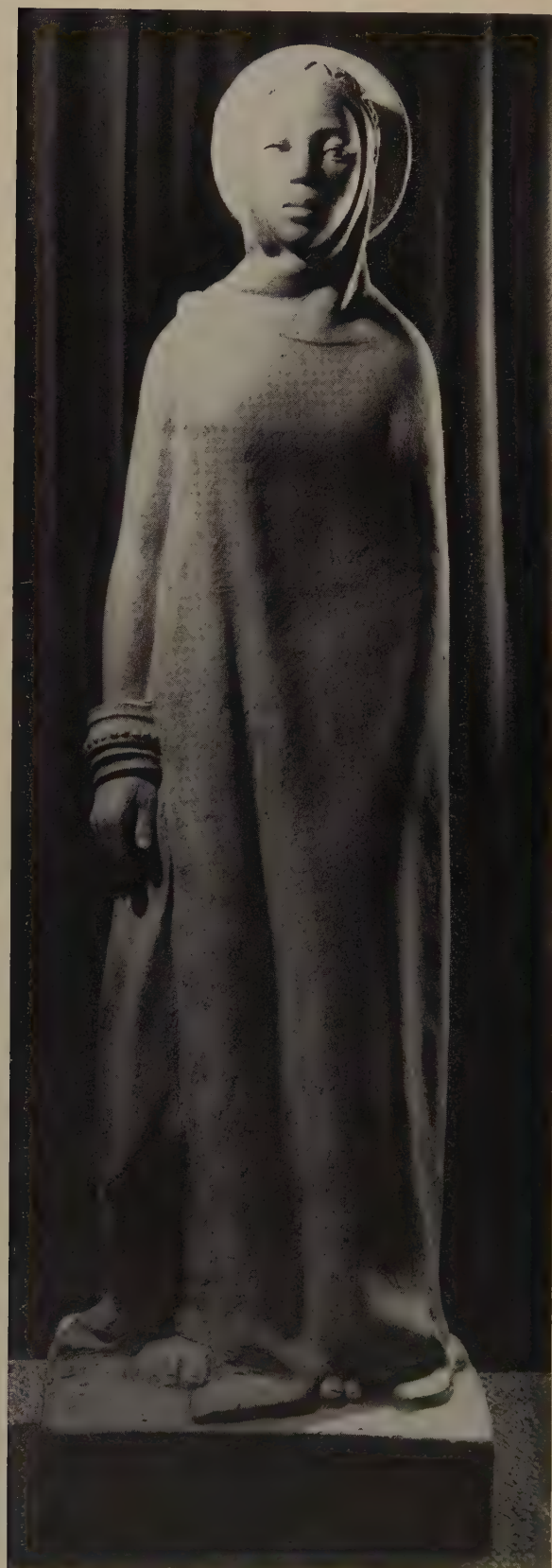


Photo C. Lamole



Church at Ruwe (Katanga) in which all elements of use and decoration were executed by the sculptor, Francois-Xavier Goddard. African and European, this artist has sought to achieve a difficult synthesis.

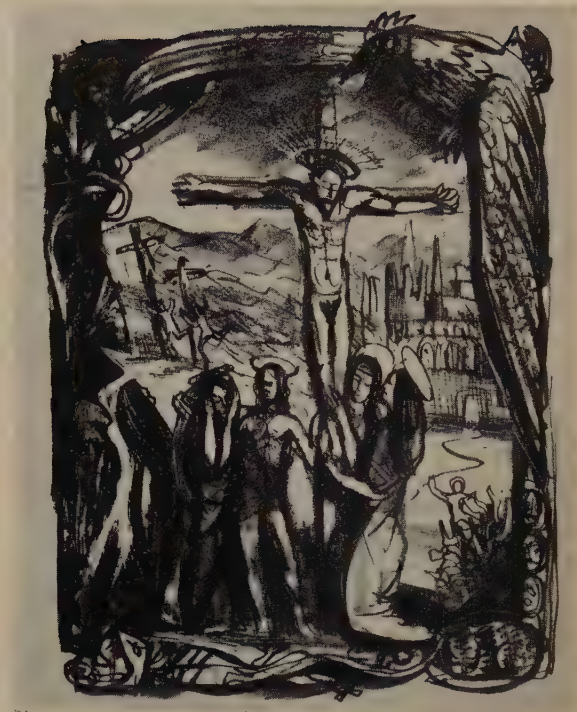


The chalice, the ciborium and the chasuble, attempt the bridge between the West and the more elemental objects illustrated on page 90 of AFRICA I.



(Below) Altar table of wood, with designs by Goddard. The harshness of the detail would gain from a less sophisticated approach to design.





(Above left to right) Crucifixion, by Maurice Van Essche. Madonna, for Saint Bridget's School, Capetown, by Lippy Lipshitz. Crucifixion, by Rupert Shephard, director of the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town. (Below) Station of the Cross, by Alfred Krenz. Mary, by Irma Stern. (See Deane Anderson's text on "Religious Art in South Africa", page 117)

CAPETOWN

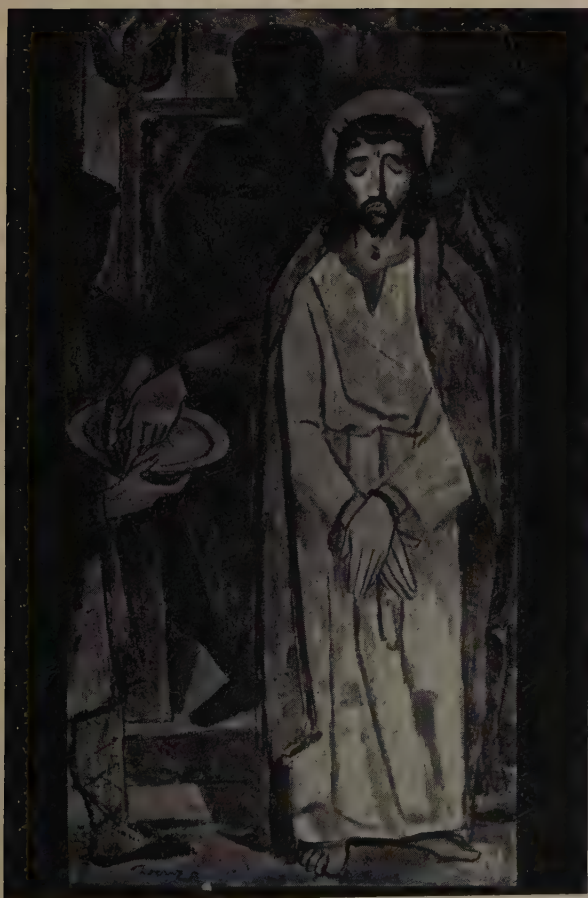


Photo Musée de l'Homme, Paris.



ABYSSINIAN ART

(Above right) Painting on canvas executed by Kassa, showing the upper part of the cylinder which surmounts the holy of holies in Abyssinian churches. (Right) Part of a diptych executed in 1929 by Wuddye. (Below) The legend of the Queen of Sheba. The first four panels represent: 1. The natives pay tribute to and worship a dragon 2. One, Agabos, proposes to kill the dragon. If successful it is agreed that he will be crowned king. 3. Preparing poison to kill the dragon 4. Baking bread and mixing with poison to feed to a lamb . . .

Photo Musée de l'Homme, Paris.



Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.



A Missionary Speaks of Building

THE REVEREND RICHARD LeCLAIR, C S S P *

IT MUST BE realized that the chances of building a church in a developed mission land decrease with time. For a young missionary of only a few years experience in the missions the opportunity of building a church is almost nil. All has been built before; and what he sees often causes many uncharitable thoughts to arise. But now there is a chance in Mashati. And because of this I have gone back again to my magazines and the many issues of LITURGICAL ARTS, just looking carefully and silently checking, comparing, and planning. But what will come of this I do not know.

However, if a church were to be built soon in Mashati Mission, just how could it be planned and built? Not just to be a large enclosed space for Catholic worship, but to be a place of worship in keeping with the world around us. This mission and its church are dedicated to Saint Joseph, the worker. That I believe is our starting point. Saint Joseph was given his title because of present-day world conditions. Saint Joseph, the worker — not the worker of the second century, or the tenth, or yesterday, but the worker of today. Today's patron saint living in today's church.

OUR new church will be contemporary in design. Nothing else would be suitable for a church dedicated to Saint Joseph, the worker of the twentieth century. The style will be simple, suitable to life on the equator with its extreme heat during the day and its very cool night air from the mountains. A church planned for a mission where all its children are workers must be designed not in a borrowed western style, but in today's simple and unclouded forms, perhaps of concrete or cement blocks, with plenty of open space. Such

a plan or style would be in line with all the new buildings going up in towns of East Africa. Gone are the western-style forts and palaces of different national tastes. Instead one sees smooth, simple concrete block buildings, with much use of open fenestration. This is the style which the natives will soon be calling their own, and rightly so. For this is the style they see in their towns, and which will be adopted by them. They have no native style to be adapted for church use. Certainly to follow the lead of the government in such building styles cannot be wrong.

IN MANY LETTERS to the editor of LITURGICAL ARTS I have expressed my views on some of the articles appearing therein. By this means I have been able to align my own thoughts with what is necessary in church building. The editor's article which appeared in the August 1955 issue was an attempt to draw forth criticisms from those on the missions as to the validity of the suggestions offered. Unfortunately few missionaries took advantage of the opportunity to air their views in the matter.

If permission were granted to build a church in our Mashati mission, just how would it be built? First of all there must be a meeting of minds, by which I mean that the local Ordinary and the missionary in charge of the mission should express their views. The results of these deliberations should then be submitted, if possible, to a qualified local architect, so that a proper working plan can be worked out. Such an architect, living in the tropics, will know just what is and what is not desirable for a church in such a region. Such consultations need not be too costly. A method might be adopted whereby the expenses of such professional work could be borne by the local authorities in charge, or even by the superior of the missionary congregation. All this may sound idealistic and a bit fantastic, but it is not altogether impossible.

The church must be large, at least large enough to hold fifteen hundred people. Many more are accommodated in the churches here because of the

different seating arrangements. Such a church is not too large when one remembers that there are at least one thousand baptisms in many places each year.

The interior of the church must be dominated by the main altar. It must be in an open space, with no distractions nearby. There need not be any side altars, since many of these are not used for days on end. A few statues preferably executed by African artists (and they can be found with a little patience and ingenuity), could enhance the dignity of the main altar, but there is certainly no need for the usual clutter. As for this clutter of mediocre "church art," we can refer to the words of the Holy Father in his letter on the Sacred Liturgy (*Mediator Dei*): "We now deem it Our duty to censure the inconsiderate zeal of those who propose for veneration in our churches, without any just reason, a multitude of sacred images and statues, and also those who display unauthorized relics, those who emphasize special and insignificant pictures, neglecting essential and necessary things; they thus bring religion in derision and lessen the dignity of worship."

The next element of importance, after the consideration of the main altar, is the location of the baptistry. This to my mind is of great import, and yet those in charge of many churches built today cannot see the importance of a well-placed and well-designed baptistry and font. Too often the question is: "How much will it cost?" Even the new Holy Week ceremonies bring to mind once again the importance of the sacrament of baptism. To have ceremonies which are designed to impress the faithful with the importance of baptism and then to disregard the location of the baptismal font is rather unreasonable.

It would seem proper that this font be located near the main entrance of the church — even perhaps on center with the main altar. Such a location would be a constant reminder for all people of the mission that it is *through* baptism and their baptismal promises that they can share in the life of God on earth. This is of greater importance in a mission land where the faith is like a new seedling only taking root. With all the inroads which modern daily life makes on all of us, the Christian faith must be indelibly imprinted upon the heart and mind of the newly baptized. Much consideration should be given to this important element in all new churches.

* Father LeClair, a Holy Ghost Father, is from Halifax, Massachusetts. He was assigned to the African Mission in 1942 and is now pastor of Mashati mission. There are 8,500 Catholics in this mission out of a population of about 18,000. It is located about fifty miles north of Moshi, on the slopes of Mount Mawenzi, the twin peak of Mount Kilimanjaro.

After the main altar and the baptistry, consideration must be given to confessionals, for after the reception of baptism, the sacrament of penance becomes the "second plank of salvation." Somewhere near the baptistry is a good place for the confessionals — well-built, not merely an afterthought.

The general plan of fenestration must be kept in mind when we are planning our church. Much open space and wide stretches of glass are more or less essential in a tropical country. There is nothing more pleasing than well-thought out fenestration. Brightness is better than a dark and dreary interior.

A bell tower should also be incorporated into the general design of the church. It helps to differentiate the church from all other surrounding structures. And it must be remembered that in a country where "Big Bens and Little Bens" are not too common, the bell calls the people to church.

ONCE THE ABOVE elements have been taken into consideration there is the question of building material. Here, as a general rule, the best building material is cement blocks, which can be manufactured by local workmen under the supervision of the priest in charge. In most missions in this region, the block measures six x nine x eighteen inches; smaller ones measure four x six x eight-

een. However, with a little imagination there is nothing against having blocks of other sizes and shapes, providing the mould is not too difficult to make. Local field stone or river stone can also be used.

As for the roof, the usual material is corrugated sheet iron or corrugated aluminum — the latter being a lighter load for the rafters and also providing a cooler interior. Tiles may also be available, and also asbestos cement roofing sheets.

Almost all other appurtenances could be obtained locally. The local iron man could make a simple altar rail and a grille for the baptistry. Even the candle holders could be made locally. Statues and stations of the cross would be obtained from local craftsmen. All this, of course, demands foresight and imagination and the *desire* to have good work.

Vestments could be made at the local sisters' convent. With proper supervision and a knowledge of the making of vestments the results could be excellent.

In short, let us try to build our mission churches according to sensible norms; to eschew the use of shoddy "catalogue" art; to urge on the authorities the fact that professional advice need not necessarily wreck the mission budget. Much can be done; much has been done; much more has still to be done.

Kano, August 22, 1956. The need for professional advice in the design and construction of churches is again apparent here — a new Church of Our Lady of Fatima. Sometimes the ingenuity of the clerical designer takes care of many details and he may hit the nail on the head "unconsciously" in matters of design, but this is a haphazard method. More and more do I feel that some central control of plans by professionals, retained perhaps by the general or provincial of the Order, might produce better results in the long run and at a reasonable yearly cost for professional advice.

During an afternoon's visit to the Emir's palace — the outer courts and the main throne room where I saw the polychromed walls and ceilings — I felt that the decorations and details of exterior ornamentation of many of the Kano houses might be successfully adapted for decoration of the concrete blocks used by so many mission operations and made on the site for each job. Here surely it would not be a question of added cost but simply of making a slightly different mould from that more commonly used.

Father Watson showed me a copy of *Pidgin English Catechism*, by Monsignor Plissonneau. Revised and extended with prayers for all church services by the Mill Hill Fathers, Cameroon Province, Nigeria. Edited by the Sodality of Saint Peter Claver, Rome, 1950. Here are some gems in this catechism:

HAIL MARIA.

Hail Maria, you get plenty gratia,
God lif with you, — you big pass all
woman — and bless lif with your
Pikin Jesus.

Holy Maria, — Mother of God —
beg God for we bad people — just
now and the time we go die. Amen.

(Chapter 10 — Laws for God)

1. I be God your Master. No get other God, only me.
2. No talk God name for nothing.
3. Keep Sunday.
4. Hear for your father and your mother.
5. No kill.
6. No kake bad.
7. No thief.
8. No lie.
9. No want other man he woman.
10. No want other man he thing.

What i be Angels?

Angels them be spirits. We not fit
look them, because them no get skin.

The Editor's Diary: XXV

(CONTINUED)

Jos, Kano, August 21, 1956. A fifty-five-minute hop in a WAAF four-motor Heron, seating fourteen in rather cramped quarters. Was met at the airport by Father Daniel Watson (African Missions), presently pastor of the Catholic mission in Kano. Half an hour later I was settled there and, as usual, was taken on a quick tour of the European part of Kano with a peek at the old Kano of mud houses and flat roofs with small domes. Later to the school — Saint Louis College, directed by the Sisters of Saint Louis — a spacious former army camp. The work accomplished by these sisters in all Nigerian Catholic schools must be seen so that their great value for the future of the country may be appreciated. The sisters

had arranged a session of gregorian chant and a few polyphonic pieces by a choir of about sixty girls, ranging in age from twelve to eighteen — bright faces and pleasant smiles. Their rendition of old favorites, such as *Ave Verum*, *Salve Regina*, and others, was excellent. These young girls could easily hold their own anywhere, and if they were to have the added benefit of a few weeks at the Pius X school at Manhattanville they would soon become serious rivals. Singing comes easily to the African man or woman: rhythm is in their blood and their enthusiasm is infectious. Another advantage is that they have a retentive memory, so that they can sing these gregorian melodies without recourse to a book or the *Liber Usualis*.

Who he been push Adam and Eva for spoil God he law?

Satan he been hide heself for inside some snake, and so he been push Adam and Eva for chop the law-stick. (meaning eat [chop] the tree of life [law-stick] — disregard the law.)

Kano-Léopoldville, August 25, 1956. A five hour trip via PAA. Settled at the Hotel Regina.

A short visit to the *Musée de la Vie Indigène*, now in process of restoration, but I did see a very interesting exhibition of the work of the students of the Ecole Saint-Luc, and I thought paintings by fifth-year boys were of a high order of excellence. The young director of the museum, M. Vanden Bossche, is wide-awake and aware of the difficulties in developing the talents of African artists without spoiling their inherent qualities of design. He alluded to the danger of European tendencies too rigidly applied, and to offset this he gave courses on ethnography at the school so that the students will become aware of and appreciate their own cultural heritage, and so imbue their work with it. In my preliminary travel notes I found a reference to a magazine called *La Voix du Congolais*, and tried to purchase a copy in several bookstores, but no one seemed to have heard of it. In one store, after I had described it more fully, the salesman merely remarked: "Ah, yes, probably a paper edited by Africans," and showed no further interest. The same for the magazine *Brousse*, edited by the Musée de la Vie Indigène. Nor could I find many books on economics, ethnography, etc., in the Belgian Congo, although the shelves of these bookshops were well stocked with all kinds of European publications, and many from England and the US. This attitude had all the earmarks of that paternalism which seems to be a characteristic of Belgian colonial policy — to treat the African as a child of nature, to see to it that he does not unduly interfere with the normal flow of life as it is now, but otherwise to ignore him and keep him in his place.

Léopoldville-Brazzaville, August 26, 1956. Sunday mass in Saint Ann's church, the famous church in Brazzaville — brick arches which spring from the floor, but other details of construction are a bit puzzling (see illustrations page 89). There is still much to be done in the interior, and the vertical curved

walls between buttresses are a *natural* for frescoes. The altar is enormous, probably fifteen feet wide and resting on two huge rocks. I have always felt that an altar should not be more than ten feet wide and in a human scale, not necessarily in scale with the general interior of the church. Here in Saint Ann's, a baldachino or tester, related to the altar and with all other elements in scale, would then be in scale with the interior and yet remain in a human scale.

Called on Mr Robert McGregor, US consul general. He and Mrs McGregor are much interested in African arts and crafts and have many objects of definite interest which they plan to take with them when they leave Léopoldville — I hope to see them again in Washington. A new consulate building is going up here, to replace the rattletrap that now houses the consulate staff and the US Information Agency. The new building, designed by Weed, Russell, Johnson and Associates, of Miami, Florida, is in line with the design theories now happily in force at the Department of State and under the direction of a wide-awake and forward-looking architectural advisory committee. As an indication of how and where architectural design is going in Africa, I plan to use illustrations of a number of these new consulate buildings, as these theories of "modern" design, it seems to me, apply equally well to church work.

Sudden thought. In the Gold Coast and Nigeria, where rumblings of independence are the loudest, the hurried traveler may wonder whether the African is ready for complete independence and control of material affairs. But when is a people ready for independence? It is puzzling, nevertheless, that nationalism should be an issue of such paramount importance in Africa today when it is on the wane in Europe. And many African problems would seem more fitted for a *federation* solution than to a one-nation solution such as is being attempted in the Gold Coast and Nigeria, where north, south, and central portions are hardly of one mind at the moment.

Léopoldville, August 27, 1956. Visited the Ecole Saint Luc and met Brother Marc, the prime mover of all its activities. At first glance it would seem that western norms had unduly influenced the young Africans, and Brother Marc admitted that in the early years (the

school has been in operation only twelve years) students were inclined to imitate western clichés, but now this first tendency has considerably diminished. What the school primarily aims to do is to give the students a firm grounding in techniques and then urge them to follow their own inspiration. Unfortunately for me nothing is sold at the school as it is the policy not to compete with the open market and with the professional work of the graduates.

In the semantic battle where words lose their meaning or have unfortunate connotations, I wonder whether a change might not be wise: for example, *adaptation* now really means a superficial veneer, a compromise, so why not use the word *assimilation*, which means more nearly *co-penetration*, a merger in which both sides — the indigenous and the European — contribute a like share.

Brazzaville, August 28, 1956. One of those banner days that make a trip worthwhile. Took the Brazzaville ferry for a ten A.M. appointment with Father Paul Bureth (White Fathers) to ask for details concerning the construction of Saint Ann's Church. But I often reach a place on the occasion of some local celebration, and today was the anniversary of the *Ralliement de l'Afrique Equatoriale Française à la France Libre*. High mass, the bishop on his throne, the commanding general, the governor and many officers — quite a gathering. Later I left Father Bureth to his many duties and went on to a luxurious lunch and three-hour stay at the *Hotel des Relais Aériens* — maintained by Air France and one of the best hotels in this part of the world.

Father Bureth proved to be one of those dynamic persons for whom "it can't be done" is a perpetual challenge. The church is an extraordinary structure and the story of its construction (since 1943) and financing is one of high courage and faith. There is still much to be done and the most immediate need is for tiles for the roof — terra cotta with a lustrous green enamel finish. Father Bureth sells each tile for about \$6.00 (1000 francs in these parts) and the name of the donor is written on the back of each tile — so *Liturgical Arts* is now a name on the back of two of these tiles. The discussion with Father Bureth and several of his collaborators was so interesting that I later reached the dock just as the last ferry to Léo was a hundred yards out on the Congo River. The alternative was to phone to Léo for a

private *vedette* (small motor boat) but this is a rather expensive proposition. A few loud whistles and much arm-waving on the part of all the Africans on the dock, anxious to help a stranded visitor, induced the ferry captain to turn about. And I was the only passenger on this return trip, and standing on the upper deck I felt like a latter-day Stanley surveying the mighty Congo. A discreet financial reward sealed a mutually satisfactory arrangement.

Léopoldville, August 29, 1956. To the Université Lovanium, located fifteen kilometers from Léo, at an altitude of five hundred meters — an admirable site — to meet the young and dynamic rector, Chanoine L. Gillon, a nuclear physicist who has worked at Oak Ridge and at Princeton. The university campus is impressive and much has been done in building — of classrooms, housing for students, and houses for faculty members. There is no color bar. African and European students live in the same building, use the same dining hall. Chanoine Gillon was optimistic about completing the ten-million-dollar plant within the next five years, and I believe he can do it. The design for the university chapel was in the process of revision but I was promised photographs of the plan, elevations, and sections.

Arranged with the *Service d'Information du Congo Belge* to have photographs taken of paintings and sculpture at the Ecole Saint-Luc, for possible illustrations in our African issue. These four full days here and at Brazzaville have produced results and data which could be obtained only with difficulty by correspondence.

Léopoldville-Johannesburg, August 30-31, 1956. Seven-hour flight via KLM. Excellent service on plane — martini, champagne, steak, coffee, a liqueur — all the *hardships* of travel in Africa today! Very cool, and many wearing topcoats. End of winter time — evening thirty degrees but the days warm up considerably — altitude six thousand feet. The Dawson hotel, small but efficient — the best hotel so far since I left New York, and relatively inexpensive.

If I had been dropped in Johannesburg out of a heavy sleep and asked where I was the next morning, as I woke up, I would have guessed Kansas City or Saint Louis. For the time being I had left *African Africa* and was back in the US.

Called at the Catholic Center, on Kerk Street, to meet one of the members of The Grail, Miss Frances Scott. Ever since my meeting with members of The Grail in foreign lands (in Hong Kong it was Miss Elizabeth Reed) I looked forward to meeting Grail members in other parts of the world. This Center is well planned — with an auditorium, a conference room, an office for the editor of the diocesan paper, a library, a book shop, but also the inevitable *repository* (church goods) shop filled with the usual items.

Later to Roodeport by train — about twenty miles from the city — to visit the headquarters of the African Music Society and to hear records, made under the direction of Hugh Tracey, of music of all kinds and of many tribes, including some church music. Mr Tracey was off somewhere in Rhodesia, collecting and tape-recording more material, but thanks to his secretary, Mrs Galpin, I was able to gather books and records which I hope to play at our next annual meeting, early in 1957. I hope later to induce Mr Tracey to write an article on the possibilities of developing church music on African melodic norms.

Visited the African Museum in the public library. This museum was founded in 1935 to portray South African history, pictorially and by means of manuscripts, autograph letters, coins, medals, and relics. There is a rich ethnological section in which are shown specimens of weapons, beadwork, basketwork, musical instruments, relating to *Bushmen, Ovambos, Barotse, Matabele, Zulus, Bechuanas*, and other tribes. All exhibits are well arranged — a fine museum.

In the afternoon a visit to the Grail headquarters at Rivonia, twelve miles from Johannesburg in the beautiful rolling countryside. There I met Miss Margaret von Gilse (in charge); Miss Marie-Thérèse McDermitt, Miss Helen Kelly; Miss Mary Buckley (who teaches at the University) — a jolly afternoon and evening and good conversation.

Whether I can get material here is doubtful. Being a typical European city it has all the disadvantages of ingrained prejudice and indifference concerning religious art. I may find hopeful signs of life in Capetown.

Johannesburg-Bloemfontein, September 3, 1956. I had long hoped to meet Brother Conrad, who had sent me sketches of his church projects and whose comments were always of definite interest for the purpose of my trip. The only address I

had was Leribe P.O., Basutoland. If I ever get to Africa again I will ask definite instructions as to how to reach some of the places that turned out to be anywhere within a radius of twenty miles or more. I had written him from Léopoldville and also sent a wire in the hope that he might have found it possible to come to Bloemfontein airport, about one hundred miles from Leribe. At the Maitland Hotel I attempted to reach him by phone, and after three hours delay I was finally informed that there was no phone in Brother Conrad's name, nor in the name of Bishop Emmanuel Mabathoana. At two-thirty P.M. I decided to try my luck by car, and was assured by one of the chauffeurs that he could reach Leribe in less than four hours, stay there an hour or so, and then return to Bloemfontein late that evening. And off we went. The taxi man was not very loquacious and my attempts at conversation met with a disconcerting sequence of "Quite, sir." About fifty miles out of Bloemfontein occurred the first of what were to be a series of mishaps — a puncture. Although I had been told that the road was good most of the way I soon found that the last fifty miles were dirt roads, up and down mountains and winding in alarming manner. Finally we reached Leribe in the gloom of nightfall, and then came the difficulty of locating the bishop's house. It developed later that the house was six miles out of town and we had passed it within a few hundred feet. In such places as Leribe and that desolate country vague directions increase the confusion, and after an hour's search I finally gave up and decided on the return trip. It was now nine P.M. In view of the last bad stretch of road my driver decided it would be best to return to Bloemfontein via Fitchburg, instead of through Maseru, from which town he could telephone and report the reason for the delay. Another hour's delay because of the difficulty of telephone communication. Off we went again, and then began the nightmare. During the hour he was supposedly telephoning his boss — and I was eating a sandwich in combination pharmacy-lunchroom — my driver had imbibed freely of beer and rum, and I soon realized that his erratic driving would lead to trouble. Another twenty miles of weaving in and out along the fortunately deserted road and I decided my tipsy friend needed a rest, and told him to curl up for an hour. Here we were in the midst of nowhere in Basutoland, and to

cap the climax, just before dozing off, the driver groaned "I'm lost." It was now near midnight. An hour later another attempt was made to navigate at least as far as a town, however small. After weaving for another twenty miles we finally came to a place I will never forget, Galoran. Then more trouble. The driver insisted that the local police should put him on the right road, and off he went along a side road, where the car's battery went dead. Two A.M., and no one in sight. Repeated attempts to waken a friendly soul or induce the local police to open their doors and come out to give us a shove were unavailing, and here we were, on a side road, amidst clumps of bushes and tall trees, and in pitch darkness. We left the car and trudged back toward the few lights near the postoffice and telephone exchange, where the lone operator refused to open the door. When we left the car in the dark to seek a good samaritan to come and push the car on the highway, my tipsy friend swore in a mealy voice that he would know exactly where he left it. By that time, three A.M., I was so cold (even with a heavy coat I had borrowed from the kindly Maitland Hotel staff), so sleepy, and getting so much madder by the minute that I neglected to take notice of the turns and twists in the road to reach the telephone shack, where the driver was to try again to reach his boss and ask for suggestions! At last the Bloemfontein office of this taxi service came up with the bright idea of telephoning its henchmen in Galoran and, if I were willing to add five pounds to the fifteen agreed to for this epic ride, these people would give us the much needed push. At that hour of the night, and in the freezing weather, I was ready to agree to any arrangement, though I thought it strange that I should be expected to pay for the breakdown of their own vehicle and for services not rendered. So we waited in the cold, dark street for our saviors. Another forty-five minutes, and no action. Then the lone telephone operator finally opened his door. He turned out to be a very pleasant young man who informed me that his father operated a fleet of taxis and would be glad to take me back to Bloemfontein within the next thirty minutes for the sum of ten pounds. I agreed and decided to leave the tipsy driver to his own devices, although he vehemently told me we could be on our way in *his* car and in record time. He had recovered slightly from his alcoholic binge, but by now I had lost all confi-

dence in anything he might do. I had decided to go along with the other driver, a tall, heavy-set man whose general appearance radiated the safety I now craved. It was imperative that I reach the Maitland Hotel in Bloemfontein in time to have a short snooze, settle my bill, and be at the airport at nine A.M. for the flight to Capetown. We reached the hotel at seven A.M., having been followed all along the hundred miles by the now more or less sober driver who, every thirty miles of so, would roar past us to show how safe a driver he really was, and how we would have reached Bloemfontein safely had I shown more patience with human frailty. A costly episode — about thirty pounds (\$84.00) — and a total fiasco so far as a meeting with Brother Conrad was concerned, but I did see quite a bit of the wild Basutoland country.

Capetown, September 4-8, 1956. Dudley Welch and Father Peter Paul Feeney, O.P., were waiting for me at the airport. Father Feeney is the vicar-provincial of the English Dominicans in South Africa and Catholic chaplain at the University of Capetown (Kolbe House). *Monsignor Frederick Charles Kolbe was one of South Africa's greatest Catholic churchmen — an Afrikaner convert. Mr Andrew Murray, of the Southern Cross, a diocesan paper, gave me a copy of the centenary collection of essays by Monsignor Kolbe, written mostly during the period 1920-1936 and published in that paper. These essays cover a wide variety of subjects; architecture, art, and music; poetry, philosophy, and controversy — all written in an urbane and witty style.*

I had been in correspondence with Mr Welch concerning his hopes to found a liturgical arts society in Capetown and we again spoke of this matter. I was anxious to know more about the activities of other artists I hoped to meet at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts, where I was to lecture the next day. After settling down at the Mount Nelson Hotel — a rather fancy place set in a garden and with a double triumphal arch at the street entrance, I called at the Michaelis School and there met Ruppert N. Shephard, the director, and Maurice van Essche — both painters, and excellent ones as I soon found out. This Michaelis School of Fine Arts is the art school of the University of Capetown. It is part of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Architecture.

Then I also met Miss Irma Stern, whose paintings made a powerful impression on me. Her collection of Afri-

can art would make many a connoisseur envious. Her own paintings are to be found in many public and private collections in South Africa and Europe.

Further discussion concerning the formation of a liturgical arts group in South Africa soon revealed tensions which I could easily understand. The clash of personalities, prejudices, etc., presides at the formation of any such group — particularly when art is concerned. But the work of Irma Stern, Maurice van Essche, Ruppert Shephard, and of the sculptor L. Lipshitz convinced me that their potential contribution to a lively cooperation in religious arts in South Africa was too important to let difficulties stand in the way. A conversation with Father Feeney, and later with Andrew Murray, and John Paris, director of the South African National Gallery, led me to suggest that Father Feeney consider accepting the presidency of such a group. His sympathy with the whole idea would place him above the "artistic" controversy and the fact that, as he once admitted to me, he was not an artist, was an asset, since in any artistic matter he could freely consult with the artists themselves. The question of the approval of Archbishop McCann came up, and here I could refer to my experience in Boston when our own Society was formed, and how surprised and disconcerted I was when I found that Cardinal O'Connell would not give us any formal approval. Later, I recall vividly that the late Monsignor Peter Guilday cleared up the matter for me as he remarked: "How can you expect to have any prelate approve something not yet done?" So, in this Capetown project it may well be that a group under the presidency of Father Feeney and with the active and elastic cooperation of all would readily receive the *patronage* (another form of tacit approval) of the Ordinary and, as a matter of fact, patronage is really all that is needed in any art group. More can be disastrous!

I hope that Father Feeney will send me a text for the African issue in which he will treat of the further evolution of this idea. At any rate, collaboration between our Liturgical Arts Society and other similar groups in all parts of the world can only be beneficial to all interested in the universal evolution of religious art.

A visit to the School of Architecture of the University of Capetown to meet Mr Thornton White, whose article on "The Architect in Africa" I had read in

The Builder, March 11, 1955. I had heard that this school of architecture was highly rated among such schools in the British Commonwealth, and I can easily believe it after meeting and talking with Professor White — a genial gentleman, witty, an epicure and a connoisseur of good wine and good cheer generally. I also met there Deane Anderson, professor of the history of architecture and well known as art critic of the Capetown *Argus*. Mr Anderson agreed to write an article on religious art in South Africa, with illustrations of the work of Irma Stern, Shephard, van Essche, Lipshitz, and others. With Father Feeney's text and Deane Anderson's critical appraisal I feel South Africa will be well represented in our African issue.

Welch and van Essche kindly took time out from their own work to show me the city and surrounding countryside. From the Rhodes Memorial, of imperial grandeur and set in a magnificent park, I had a wonderful view of the city. On clear days it is possible to see the Atlantic and Indian oceans at the same time.

A visit to the finest example of old Dutch architecture — *Groot Constantia* — a link with seventeenth century South Africa. The original farm was granted by the Dutch East India Company to Governor van der Stel, in recognition of faithful services rendered in the promotion of agriculture. The present building is an accurate reconstruction of the original, which was destroyed by fire in December 1925.

A visit to the South African National Gallery and an interesting conversation with Mr and Mrs John Paris, on religious art and related matters. All in all, a fruitful visit and a very pleasant one, thanks to the kindness of everyone in Capetown.

Durban-Marianhill, September 10, 1956. Durban could be Atlantic City, with its tourist and vacation hotels along the beautiful waterfront of the Indian Ocean. At the Edward Hotel I had a fine room and bath and a view of the ocean, \$8.00 including the inevitable early morning tea. To Marianhill, about fifteen miles from the city, where I visited the large convent and saw the work of Sister Pientia and of her pupils. There is a delightful folklore air about the work of these young African students, and I was given several water colors for possible illustration in the magazine. The best of Sister Pientia's

own paintings are the two ways of the cross — one in the convent chapel, the other in the chapel of the hospital. I hope to have illustrations of this work.

Marianhill and its surrounding countryside form a diocese one hundred years old, with its own bishop. It is another example of the extraordinary growth of such mission foundations. Francis Schimlek, in his book *Marianhill: A Study of Bantu Life and Missionary Effort*, provides us with an excellent introduction to the subject of missionaries who reached the Bantu soul insofar as it is possible. This is a book to be read by anyone wishing to evaluate the problems which now confront South Africa.

Johannesburg, September 12, 1956. A memorable ride through the Moroka location, some five miles from the city, with a Cape colored Catholic priest, Father X, and Miss Margaret van Gilse, head of the Grail foundation in Johannesburg. Normally it would be inviting trouble for a white visitor to drive through these old locations. We saw the appalling conditions under which the Africans live in the shanty towns, but we also saw the new houses in the nearby new locations. Father X felt that Father Huddleston's angry book *Naught for Your Comfort* had, in reality, added to the general trouble, and he stated that even the Africans were relieved when Father Huddleston was declared *persona non grata* by the government, because his fulminations resulted in the tightening of already sufficiently drastic measures of control.

In the old locations the Africans were bled white by the exactions of the landlords (not always white landlords, either). In the new locations the African can purchase his own home on a long term loan, and this sense of ownership was reflected in the care taken by quite a few residents I saw along the road in arranging a garden in front of the small house, in putting up a little fence — in fact, doing what all small house-owners the world over do when they have at last achieved their goal. Whether these housing efforts by the government, in the face of total *apartheid* and the consequent degradation of the African, can overcome or even lessen the tension one feels everywhere is a question I will not attempt to answer here.

An evening at the Grail headquarters during which I spoke on the purposes of my trip and showed lantern slides of

work in the United States. The group included a number of architects. One of them, Mr Monaghan, is the resident architect for the proposed new cathedral in Johannesburg. The original design was of the usual variety of illegitimate romanesque but now, thanks to economic restrictions, the design has become simpler and looks a bit like a watered-down version of Coventry. Even so it is a considerable improvement on the previous design. If the resident architect can get a few Capetown artists to collaborate on the interior decoration of this new cathedral, South Africa may have something to be proud of in the way of religious art.

Johannesburg-Elisabethville, September 13-17, 1956. A five-hour flight via Sabena — indifferent service, the hostess would not last a minute on a PAA plane. An interminable immigration and customs performance. Every employee seemed to be working at cross purposes, and if the airport has a manager he was nowhere to be seen. Another plane landed a few minutes after the Johannesburg flight and, in good Franco-European fashion the late arrivals tried to sneak their way ahead of those of us whom they obviously took for foreign tourists. Travel manners of the local gentry in certain parts of Europe and Africa leave much to be desired.

Settled at the Hotel Léopold II — best in town and conveniently located — \$6.00 a day for room and bath and if you add meals the total daily cost is about forty per cent higher than at the Dawson hotel in Johannesburg. The room service is all African, somewhat lackadaisical in a good-natured way. Here I was again in Africa, after the European efficiency of South Africa.

Called on Mr Arnold Lamoral, at the office of the daily newspaper *L'Essor du Congo*. Mr Lamoral is now president of *L'Union Africaine des Arts et des Lettres* and publishes an excellent quarterly, *Jeune Afrique*. He is also director of IMBELCO (Imprimerie Belgo-Congolaise). I also met here Maurice van Essche's brother Paul, who is the administrator of *L'Essor du Congo* and of IMBELCO.

A few minutes with Mr Lamoral and things began to hum. He is an efficient person and knows everyone in town, or so it seemed to me. Soon there came to the office Father Cornelis Floribert, OSB (from Saint André, Bruges, Belgium) superior of the Mission Saint-Jean — another dynamic person who

gave me a good deal of valuable data and later took me on a tour of the cité-indigène where I could evaluate the difference in colonial mentality between South Africa and the Belgian Congo. One difference is that, here, the African town is contiguous with the European city; also that the general relations are not as strained as they are in South Africa.

Four years ago when I first corresponded with Romain-Desfossés, founder and animator of the Ecole d'Art Indigène, I looked forward to the pleasure of meeting him. But it was too late; he died two years ago. Mr Moonens, who was head of the art school in Elisabethville, has now taken over, and although his style and method of teaching differ from that originated by Romain-Desfossés, what is being done by the students is of decided and continued interest. The work of students subjected to both tendencies can be seen on the walls of the new theatre, a superb example of modern architecture by a young and talented architect, Claude Strébelle. More power to others like him. If architects of this calibre, together with the other two members of his group (Jean Leloup and André Débuyl), were actively sponsored by the missionaries, religious art and architecture in this part of the Belgian Congo would become fruitful and alive. This group, or as the French call it, *équipe*, operates under the name of YENGA, which means, in Kiswahili, *to build*. One interesting development to come from this spirit of collaboration among these three young architects concerns the establishment of a museum to house the many paintings, sculpture, textiles, left by Romain-Desfossés. Later they hope to establish a center where artists and craftsmen can furnish all the elements needed for the buildings to come — a kind of cooperative effort through which all talents can contribute to further the evolution of art at all levels and of the highest quality. It will be interesting to follow the evolution of this plan. Here, as in many other countries, the architects and artists are generally ready and anxious to work for the Church, but a deadening indifference or timidity can discourage all but a few who refuse to quit. The illustrations of a new seminary indicate what could be expected if this vigorous YENGA group were actively sponsored by the hierarchy and clergy.

Called on Archbishop De Hemptinne, O.S.B. (Saint André, Bruges) a member of a distinguished Belgian family. He is

a venerable prelate — eighty years old — with the countenance of a prophet enhanced by a long white beard. He came to Elisabethville in 1910 and remembers the early days when what is now a fine, growing city was only a few years removed from the bush. In a way, he is really *Monsieur Elisabethville*.

The city, with its broad avenues and generally attractive buildings, is a very pleasant place. Life is free and easy, distances between places and business and home are not great and I can understand why Europeans enjoy the many amenities which they might not always afford at home. Long paid vacations every three years are a necessity for Europeans working in Africa. Employees of large firms or of the government are assured free housing in addition to a generous salary — for living expenses are rather high.

The colonial policy of Belgium seems to me to be the best-working policy in Africa today — even though the typical *coloniaux* know that the African will increasingly share in the government and business life of the country, they do not fear the future, nor do they feel that increasing African control of their destiny means the “suicide of the white population,” a belief prevalent in South Africa. The Belgians accept the necessity of having both white and African live on a basis of equality when the time comes and when the African reaches a point where his capacities and sense of responsibility justify this equality. But they do want the evolution to be progressive. The next twenty-five years will be the test of the English version of colonialism, as exemplified by the coming independence of the Gold Coast, and the Belgian theory of progressive integration. In the Belgian Congo the general opinion seems to be that thirty years will be needed before the hopes and aspirations of the Africans can be fully realized.

This Elisabethville episode of my African trip was one of the most rewarding for me. The ready help given me by key men in all walks of life made it possible to gather first-hand impressions and material.

Elisabethville-Usumbura (Ruanda-Urundi), September 18-19, 1956. Generally, throughout this tour, I have been fortunate in my contacts. Before I left Elisabethville I was told of an unusual way of the cross in a church at Jadotville, about eighty miles away, but could not get there because of time and the mis-

erable condition of the roads. The artist, however, Madame Simone Burniaux, was now in Usumbura — so, after settling down at the *Hotel Paquidas* (second rate but inexpensive — \$4.00 a day, and the Grand Hotel opposite about the same) I called on Madame Burniaux, and Operation Usumbura was under way. The figures in this Jadotville way of the cross were of African soldiers, and the comments of the parishioners point out the difficulties and also the solutions used to achieve that assimilation which seems to be logical in handling religious art matters in mission lands — and at home, too, for that matter! At first, these Jadotville parishioners did not like the idea of African soldiers mistreating our Lord and they remarked: “After all, this time we had nothing to do with this so why blame us?” In some cases I have heard about, such a remark would be enough to make the clergy tell me “You see, my people don’t want that kind of art.” But in Jadotville the majority of the African community readily understood and agreed when it was pointed out to them that such personages as Simon, the Holy Women, Veronica — were also pictured as Africans. They readily accepted the fact, once it was pointed out to them, that Africans, like whites, number both the good and the bad. In other words, in matters of this kind sympathetic explanation and ordinary pedagogical methods can overcome what is likely to be taken as opposition. *Too often the assumed opposition is really the prejudice of the white man*, just as in our world the opposition (sic!) is often the prejudice and ignorance of the one who voices it.

Then Madame Burniaux showed me many of her abstract paintings, and it occurred to me that such designs could easily be translated into stained glass windows which would fit wonderfully well in African churches of simple, pure design. By a great coincidence an architect was to call later to see my hostess — Roger Damien, inspector in the office of African cities for the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. He turned out to be the architect of a project for a church at Knock, Belgium, which was illustrated in the August, 1950, issue of LITURGICAL ARTS, and it was thanks to him that I could visit the inter-racial college run by the Jesuit Fathers — perched high on the mountain at an altitude of some four thousand feet and with a magnificent view of Lake Tanganyika. I had first seen this group of buildings from the plane, and I *know* I would see it

later. From the air the main building reminded me of Wah Yan College, Kowloon (Hong Kong), also conducted by the Jesuit Fathers. Only two sections of the entire project are completed but I saw the model and found that I could later get all needed data from the architect in Belgium, Roger Bastin of Namur. The reason for the location of these buildings is interesting. The African boys who attend the school as boarders (there are twenty white boys there as well) come from the high-altitude villages of Ruanda-Urundi, and the spot suits them well. This follows the plan initiated by the *Union Minière du Haut Katanga* in having their workers, coming from high altitudes, go through a progressive period of acclimatization from high to low altitudes — an intelligent instance of adaptation. Later Mr Damien showed me the plans for new African towns, near Usumbura, divided into well-planned sections, each with its church and community complex. I can get data for publication from headquarters in Brussels. This is an example of how the professional touch can produce designs for churches where *form follows function*, and all within the scope of limited means. If the Church could see and solve the problems of art and architecture with the same imaginative insight devoted to the many projects sponsored by government or by large corporations in the Belgian Congo and in Ruanda-Urundi, the overall result could be very much better. Here again, *it can be done!*

Entebbe-Kampala, Uganda, September 20-21, 1956. Entebbe — the “government” city of Uganda. Trim lawns, fine homes — all have that English touch quite different from the atmosphere of a city like Elisabethville where everything is just as trim as here but with a Latin touch!

The Lake Victoria Hotel — barely two miles from the airport and facing Lake Victoria with the golf course in between — is a very impressive place and commands a magnificent view of the lake. Reasonable cost, 55 shillings a day, with three meals (about \$8.00)

Met Paul Kipling, an education officer of the UK, teaching art at Saint Mary's College, Kisubi (between Entebbe and Kampala), a domain of the White Fathers, who have all of Uganda as their territory. This college is conducted by Canadian brothers, and most of the White Fathers here are Canadians. Mr Kipling was somewhat pessi-

mistic concerning the possibility of a *living* religious art in these parts, but his problem here is complicated by the fact that, added to a certain lack of sympathy for the study of art, he has to cope with the African mentality among students who come, in the main, directly from homes in the bush. That is the problem in nearly all of Africa, but there is also the advantage that a “teacher” can work with raw material and the results will be a test of his own adaptability, enthusiasm, ingenuity, and patience. Many who work with such raw material may smile at these comments of a hurried traveler, and yet I wonder whether I am not near the truth in the matter! The great difficulty for a European in Africa is to swim in the immensity of African ways of life and thought. The Belgians seem to have that quality of progressive assimilation to an appreciable extent.

Later I met Mrs Margaret Trowell at her home, eight miles from Kampala, a spot of great beauty and with a garden of varied vistas, created by herself with a remarkable sense of intriguing informality. Then to Makerere College in Kampala — after a pleasant luncheon at the Uganda Club (inter-racial). The governor, Sir Benjamin Cohen, has been criticized for giving the African too many privileges (the African would call them rights) but the net result of his policy is an air of ease in Uganda, and very welcome after the atmosphere of tension and hatred in other places, notably in the Union of South Africa.

At the art school of Makerere College I saw the work of Mrs Trowell's students, much of it very good. I will have photographs for the African issue. When a newcomer looks at such work he is likely to expect excellence from many, but even one African of talent each year in such a school would be good, as it would be good anywhere, particularly if such a student could see the possibility of actual commissions later on. Here again, the teacher is confronted with the solution of African versus European concepts, and the trick is to find a way to give the African something of our best without infringing upon or lessening his own native qualities.

At Makerere the student must, for two years, work in all media; then he may concentrate either on painting, sculpture, or the graphic arts. Two brothers from Saint Mary's College have done excellent work, and they will develop later if given the much needed opportunities by their superiors.

Met Father Jean-Paul Demers, procurator of the White Fathers in Uganda — a dynamo — and thanks to him I saw a good deal of the sprawling city of Kampala, the chief missionary center of Uganda. It is the residence of the native ruler (the Kabaka), once banished by the British government for his insistence on ruling in a somewhat dictatorial manner, or so felt the English. We went on to Rubaga, a few miles from Kampala, to pay my respects to Archbishop Cabana, the brother of the Archbishop of Sherbrooke, Canada, a long-time member of the Liturgical Arts Society. Also met members of The Grail, who staff the hospital — Dr Magdalene Oberhoffer, Ruth Chisholm and Joan Dilworth. If I ever fall ill in far-off places I hope The Grail people will be around to help me out. Met there Father Pierre Goulet, W.F., an old-timer on the missions, who wrote the book *Sur les rives du Lac Victoria*. He told me of having met Theodore Roosevelt. The little monument on the shores of Lake Victoria, at Entebbe, which records the arrival of the White Fathers in 1879 (missionaries like Father Goulet and those mentioned in his book) is eloquent testimony to a heroic past so near to our times. While listening to Father Goulet tell of those early days of the mission in Uganda I recalled Archbishop De Hemptinne, in Elisabethville, telling me of his arrival there in 1910, when the city was still a “dream.” The difficulties encountered by the missionaries and government officials in their dealings with the African population are understandable when we realize that the past fifty years have witnessed the emergence of the African from a bush existence to the atomic age. Europe took centuries to accomplish the same evolution, so it is no wonder that the problems in Africa are of such magnitude and complexity today.

As I go along I am convinced of the fact that Africa can be saved from chaos and from the damaging effects of the “apartheid” mentality of fear and hatred of white civilization only by a truly Christian approach. The time is *now*.

Nairobi, Kenya, September 22-23, 1956. Here will end the African journey. I had hoped to get to Mwanza, on the southern shore of Lake Victoria, to meet Bishop Blomjous, but the many delays and the need to be in London on the 28th to see the exhibition of the windows for the new Coventry Cathedral made that trip impossible.

It would be easy to remain in Africa for two or three months longer to see all that I have missed, but perhaps another opportunity will come along to fill these gaps. Africa really needs a return trip! And who knows — it may come to pass?

Arriving in the city of a Saturday evening had the usual disadvantages, but I did meet the Maryknoll Fathers this morning at the house they maintain for their Tanganyika missionaries. Before lunch I had the opportunity to discuss many questions of building for the missions and to get a clearer idea of what *Liturgical Arts* might do in the matter. I have long resisted the temptation of writing a book on my experiences during the trip around the world, in the Caribbean, in Mexico, and now in Africa, but after this morning's conversation I wonder whether I can agree with Father Ewing's suggestion made to me during the last missiology week at Fordham University: "What you should do now is write a book for the use of missionaries, with illustrations, advice, plans, etc., to help them solve their building problems." These issues of the magazine on the result of the African adventure can be the preparation for such a possible book — and yet I wonder?

At last, an opportunity to see wild animals in the National Park, barely five miles from Nairobi, thanks to the Maryknoll Fathers, who drove me around for several hours with an African guide. Until then my trip as a tourist had been a total loss and I could not return without having proof that wild animals were really to be seen in Africa. We saw giraffes, gazelles, zebras — but had to go off the beaten path to find lions: finally we saw six lady lions sunning themselves and looking very bored. We were then about fifty yards away, but *in* the car and all doors locked.

Although Mrs Eugenia Hughes (an architect with whom I had corresponded prior to my trip) was away electioneering for the Legislative Assembly, I met Mr Watson, of her office, and arranged for photographs of the model of the proposed Nairobi cathedral.

The Norfolk Hotel is a comfortable, old-fashioned place — a main building with cottages surrounding a courtyard; other more pretentious cottages are nearby. This is quoted from the hotel leaflet:

"The Norfolk Hotel, Nairobi's equivalent of the old inns of England, was

built when Nairobi was young and headstrong with a touch of America's romantic West about the town and its people. It gained an affectionate place in the hearts of the early settlers, and though the rickshaw races, the clatter of hooves, and the ebullient thunder of forty-fives are a memory, the affection and the atmosphere remain."

(Room, bath, and meals, 50 shillings a day, about \$7.00)

As a city Nairobi is a bit messy, with a few modern buildings here and there. As in so many East and South African cities, business is largely in the hands of Indians, who are good businessmen but whose ethics are, at times, questioned by many. Although I spent a few hours in the famous journalistic bar of the New Stanley hotel, I did not meet any famous correspondent. As a matter of fact, I did not meet any of the famous and glamorous characters you read about in the newspapers. They were probably deep in the bush!

Moshi, Tanganyika, September 25-27, 1956.

This was one of the major places which justified my African trip. I had corresponded with Father Richard LeClair, C S Sp. for some time, and was anxious to meet him. At the airport I was met by Father Anton Morgenroth, C S Sp, and heard of Father LeClair's illness and hospitalization for typhoid fever — the result, probably, of unclean drinking vessels at some African parish meeting. A missionary finds it difficult, at times, to avoid taking food and drink at some native festivity and a European, even one long in the country, can come to grief. But Father Morgenroth and Father E. Nader, took me in charge and the Moshi episode was a very pleasant and a fitting end to this African journey.

The evening was ideal, and from the porch of the priests' house (this is the Holy Ghost secondary school, Umbwe, about five miles from Moshi and in what, to me at least, was real African country) I was lucky to see Mount Kilimanjaro in all its snow-covered glory. There are two great peaks of Kilimanjaro, the highest of which, Kibo, rises to 19,565 feet. Umbwe itself is at a five thousand-foot altitude and the nights are cool at this time of the year — fifty-four degrees and three blankets. Moshi is ringed with mountains and since the distances are not great from Nairobi, with a stop at Arisha, the plane flies low and the trip is a bumpy one.

Earlier, when I arrived in Moshi, Father Morgenroth introduced me to

Mr A. Bennett, the European advisor of the Kilimanjaro Native Co-operative Union, Ltd., now housed in a very fine modern building. This Union is twenty-five years old, and has thirty-five affiliated societies with over 35,000 members who own some 20,000 acres of Arabica coffee plantations yielding an annual crop of 6,000 tons. The first plantings of coffee on Kilimanjaro were made at the Catholic Mission at Kilema, in about 1890.

The flourishing missions in the general area of Moshi are astonishing evidences of the faith in this part of Africa. And the devotion and piety of the African people are a wonder. At the seven o'clock mass the morning after my arrival I heard the boys of the Umbwe secondary school sing a requiem mass with gusto, excellent Latin pronunciation, and all the gregorian nuances, and from memory, without a *Liber Usualis*. The members of our Society's schola would have been astonished and edified. And I am told that this happens in all mission churches, most of them large and accommodating upwards of 2,000 at each mass.

The next night and day rain — what Father Nader called a light rain but enough to make the normally dusty road turn to deep, thick mud. However, thanks to the touch Land Rover (the English jeep) we were able to reach a number of the mission stations: Kibosho; Marangu (9,000 Christians) in charge of the White Fathers; Kilema, first mission on Kilimanjaro, founded in 1890 — the see of the diocese of Moshi (Bishop Joseph Byrne, and Father Noppinger, vicar general).

About 250,000 people (Chagga tribe) live on the slopes of Kilimanjaro, of whom about 100,000 are Catholics. There are twenty-four African priests and more than a hundred African sisters and brothers.

The growth of an African clergy seems to presage the eventual end of a European clergy, and this is really the ultimate aim of all missionaries' work in the world.

While visiting these missions and realizing the heroic and selfless work of the early and present-day missionaries it is easy to overlook the "artistic" side of such wonderful spiritual achievements. Some of the best examples of architecture are those which seem to make little impression on the average missionary — such as the main house at Kibosho and the bishop's house at Kilema.

Here no one thought of "art," and consequently the results *are* art. But when the wrong conception of architecture rears its ugly head we have half-breed churches designed without benefit of professional advice. The *building* brothers have done, and are doing, good work, but design is still looked upon as a useless luxury.

And as Moshi is really the end of this African safari I can do no better than to quote from the pastoral letter of the seventeen archbishops, bishops, and prefects apostolic to the Catholic people of Tanganyika, July 11, 1953, as this passage epitomizes my impression of Catholic Africa:

"And no matter how imperfect, misguided, or even reprehensible, may be

certain aspects of African social, political, and economical institutions, it is by seeking first what is good in these that we can hope to lay lasting foundations for the Africa of to-morrow. We might just mention in this connection the strength of family ties and tribal organizations, the respect for laws, custom, authority, and native wisdom, intolerance of injustice and the universal belief, sometimes obscured and often distorted, it is true, in a supreme Being."

The general behavior of the boys at this Holy Ghost secondary school of Umbwe, in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro, their hunger for education and their scholastic achievements, bear out this statement of the hierarchy of Tanganyika.

A State of Mind and of Heart

BROTHER CONRAD*

MY FATHER was an architect, and though I have never studied this engrossing and rewarding art, it has always held my interest. I sometimes helped my father decide certain small details of design in his work. As I look back, I remember most of this work as having simplicity and proportion. This, and my mother's love of balance and restraint in decoration, had much to do with my preference for simple lines and plain surfaces, and this in turn made me an easy conquest for contemporary art. There was, however, no time in which to pursue my ideal, since I left for Canada and the Brotherhood while I was still in high school. But I lived for three years in the beautiful Mont-Sacré-Coeur, Provincial House of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. Besides being inspired by the art around us, we also had to sketch artistic details of the house in our art classes. And the six years spent in our novitiate in Rhode Island, one of those charming old colonial mansions, also contributed to my education.

By this time I had begun to tinker with ideas and designs for a chapel, complete with all furnishings. Then, just

as I thought I might have a chance of contributing to the chapel the Province was planning, a letter arrived announcing my appointment to Basutoland, our South African mission. Thus ended my dream of someday designing a church or chapel; or so I thought, at least. But I had not been in Basutoland a year when there was talk of enlarging the actual cathedral of the diocese of Leribe † or of building a new one. I presented His Lordship, Bishop Maba-thaona OMI, with a few suggestions and sketches on both propositions.

In the meantime I had entered into correspondence with Mr Maurice Lavaron, secretary of the Liturgical Arts Society, in New York. On his suggestion, I sent these sketches of the cathedral project for examination and comment by Mr Joseph A. Borreca, a New York architect and a member of the Society. I was diffident about the results, since I had no confidence in the validity of my designs. I awaited the answer of this expert in the field with some trepidation. Mr Borreca's comments were a revelation. He found merit where I thought none existed, corrected with sympathy, and what is more important, improved the designs and transformed them into agreeable entities, adding

originality and character to the composition; and this only by slight alterations. There was little changed, but in that little lay the difference between the amateur and the professional, between the student and the artist.

THE FOLLOWING might serve as an example of the procedure through which missionaries sometimes hit on the design for their churches:

After many years with an inadequate chapel, Roma College, the largest of the few Catholic high schools in Basutoland, will soon have a new chapel to replace the old one. The first object of consideration was, of course, the funds available for the project — \$9,000.00. Not much according to American standards. The college authorities figured that a pre-fabricated shed (105' x 40', with 11' foot-walls) would be cheap and quickly erected. A portico surmounted by a "Saint Sulpice" statue that formerly stood on the site of the future chapel, two narrow windows on either side, and a small spire above the front gable; these would serve to disguise the shed as a chapel. It was then discovered that wood trusses would prove much cheaper, and that stone was now available as there was a lull in the construction of Pius XII University next door. Gothic arches, a "must" with certain people, were passed over for a more functional design and for the same reason — too expensive. All this time, the size and shape of the original shed remained unchanged. The spire, which was intended to give height to the building, was retained even when the solid wall beneath it made way for a large window above the door. It does seem anomalous to have a window crowned by a spire! This is the time when we sigh for professional advice. Its coming from the outside makes an impartial consideration of suggestions more likely, and its coming from one *who knows* makes its acceptance easier in some cases.

There are still some difficulties to overcome in regard to expert assistance. There is a feeling among some missionaries that the African wants no art, native or otherwise; that he would not appreciate it if it were given him; and that there are many more important things to be thought of before art. An old missionary priest once told me: "If you want a church that will please the people just build it big; then they will exclaim — Oh! how beautiful! Put all the art you want in it, windows and

* Saint Theresa Seminary, Roma, Basutoland.

† See diary entry for September 3, 1956.

the rest, they won't even notice it." Before answering these objections, let us expose the fallacy which lies in this way of thinking. Art is not that which is added to a barn to make it look like a church. It is much deeper than that. It is rather in the conception of the building, its appropriateness to its purpose, the proportion, the harmony of detail, the consistency and unity which underlie the whole and guide it to completion.

Another stumbling block are those whose stock in trade are photographs of churches and chapels with details that particularly appeal to them. The post-card *expert* is a dangerous one. When he is faced with the problem of building a church he will take an altar from here, a tower from there, and patch all these disparate elements into one crazy-quilt design. The ideal would rather be to give each church design a personality, an individuality which stems not from eccentricity but from a unified design adapted to the circumstances and patiently pursued to its fulfillment. If only it could be brought home forcibly enough that beauty, simplicity, and even humility can agree very well together; that expert guidance does not mean extravagant and impractical plans. If professional architects can submit designs that are attractive and at the same time simple and easy to build, the case is more than half won. A point which makes this task a hard one is that windows and doors should usually be of standard sizes, since the cost of custom-made ones is prohibitive. And then certain standard items, such as corrugated iron roofs, common in South Africa, are rather dull—if not plain ugly. The architect who succeeds in overcoming these several difficulties will deserve whatever fame he achieves.

NOW TO answer the objection already raised: "The African does not want art. . . ." People reared in the shadow of the great European cathedrals might find a great number of American churches dull and insipid. Yet many Americans seem quite satisfied with what they have. Is this a valid reason to leave the standard of church art in America at its present level? Most Americans would find mission churches in Africa nothing more than a clean shed. Yet most Africans are quite content. Is this a reason to leave things as they are? Talks on the subject will avail little; but give the African really beautiful churches to worship in, and his taste for the beautiful will soon improve. And

as for the fascination of size, is the African the only one to fall prey to it?

This brings up the thorny question of the adaptation of native forms to the liturgical arts. Most theories on adaptation are easy enough to subscribe to—in theory. What is difficult is the practice. Anyone who has spent some time among the Africans, especially the less Europeanized ones, will readily concede that they differ greatly from ourselves in mental make-up, mode of expression, and concepts of beauty. The trouble is that the literate minority, through an inferiority complex on a national scale, repudiates its own culture in favor of that of the "whites." They unconsciously equate all efforts to introduce native forms in church art with the oft-expressed wish of the "Europeans" that they "keep in their place" and "develop along their own lines," which is the official policy of the Union of South Africa. This evidently increases an already difficult task. And then add to this the fact that we are the ones who introduced the things which we would now ask them to abandon in favor of those which we once rated as inferior. This must cause confusion unless we go about it in a gradual and quiet way. Nothing must savor of innovation; this the Africans distrust.

Among people who practice wood-carving or work in clay, weaving or grasswork, the main difficulty lies in turning their attention to religious themes, and guiding their work to keep it within the bounds of orthodoxy. In places like Basutoland, where emphasis is on the purely practical, the task consists in trying to interest them in artistic expression. So far little of this has been done except in the lower classes at school, and then especially with girls. They show a surprising sense of form when they model in clay objects or animals with which they are familiar. If those showing real talent were encouraged and given special instruction, they might become the artists of tomorrow.

As for the adaptation of native building styles or techniques, this is impossible where the largest buildings are rondavels twenty or thirty feet in diameter. The best solution lies in making a fresh start, keeping in mind local conditions and trying to retain something of the atmosphere of the place. Some thought must also be given to the landscape. Any attempt to rival nature by raising lofty structures would look ridiculous in this land of towering mountains. The emphasis should be rather on

simplicity and economy, with beauty depending more on proportion and the intelligent use of the materials on hand than on intricacy of design and costly materials.

The plan which calls for community cooperation in the building of a parish can hardly be used in Basutoland, since most of the able-bodied men are at work in the mines, far from home and from their families. But I would be interested in seeing what a group of women, under sympathetic direction, might do in the decoration of small mission churches. The little I have seen of their homes, where they plaster the walls with different colored clays in which they execute geometric designs while the clay is still wet, makes me think it is worth trying, but so far I do not know of any church where such work has been attempted.

WHEN it comes to statues, murals, ways of the cross, etc., we are up against a strong wall of opposition if we intend to introduce native forms. This I found out through experience. Not long after my arrival in Basutoland I made a pastel drawing of the Blessed Virgin as a young African girl; beneath it were the simple words: "Ave Maria." I hung it without comment in my class of high school freshmen (aged 16 to 24). It attracted their attention immediately they entered the class, and distracted them from the lessons until one of the students hazarded the following: "Brother, may you draw the picture of any girl, write 'Ave Maria' under it and thus make it into the picture of Our Lady?" Then began a heated discussion for and against, in which most of the class were against. A frequent rejoinder was that Our Lady was not an African. They probably absorbed the counter arguments that I advanced but they showed no sign of it then. Months later, however, I painted a picture of the Sacred Heart as a Mosuto shepherd showing us his heart. At a subsequent ceremony, Father Breault, O M I, vicar general of the diocese of Leribe, took as the theme of his sermon the significance of the drawing: Jesus is our real brother. It was not long before the students began to invite their friends to come and see their "Mosuto Sacred Heart."

Last year we intended to erect a monument in honor of the centenary of the feast of the Sacred Heart. The first need was a statue. Having practiced stonecutting on a cornerstone, I jokingly told Father Gilbert, O M I, who had re-

placed Father Bréault, that if he gave me a stone I would endeavor to make a statue of it. He took me at my word and soon I had a six-foot block of white sandstone waiting for me. I prepared a sketch of a simple figure on modern lines and risked a rebuff by giving it African features. After much discussion the principal permitted me to proceed if the bishop approved, which he did heartily, adding that it was about time that something of the kind was done. All my confrères, Africans included, looked askance at the idea. At times their opposition flared into heated argument; but I kept at it nevertheless, after school hours, on Saturdays and holidays, until the statue was completed. It will soon be erected before the new Sacred Heart high school at Saint Monica mission.

Then came a commission to cast a statue of the same subject in cement for a commemorative shrine at the mother house at Roma, Basutoland. This time the authorities specified that it should be something in the "Sacred Heart Messenger" style, a "real" Sacred Heart. Our young aspirants followed the project closely, but expressed mild disappointment when they noticed that it had "Europeanized" features. A lively discussion ensued which lasted for quite a few days. One disconcerting and oft-repeated remark was: "They made Him white because they are white," which is often the real reason although we make a show of historical accuracy. But there

was no resentment and our African aspirants soon sank into acquiescence as they will do before any will that is more determined than their own. This makes it difficult to know their real feelings on the subject; the only way to form some idea of their opinion is to study their immediate reactions.

FROM impartial observation, however, it is clear that attitudes toward the problem of adaptation differ widely even among Africans. The African sisters and hired women at my first mission followed with interest the progress of the statue of the indigenous "Sacred Heart" which I was executing in stone. The reaction of the African sisters at my new place was quite different; they laughed and exclaimed to each other as they pointed to the "Mosuto Sacred Heart." This latter reaction always reminds me of the words of Nathanael: "What good can come out of Nazareth?" or of the even more prophetic exclamation of our Lord: "A prophet is not received in his own country." I firmly believe that until the Africans are ready to love and follow a Christ like in all things to them save only in sin and concupiscence they have not fully accepted Christianity; they have not opened to Him the innermost recesses of their being. *You cannot view Christ, His Mother, and His Church as foreign and still find in it in you to die for them if necessary.*

Africa practice no formal art — painting and sculpture have never been a strong point with the Zulus and their related tribes. They could always handle the assegai better than the sculptor's knife. The artistic abilities of the present Bantu races of South Africa are confined to the simple processes of decorating their everyday objects with geometrical designs, or putting decorations — often very beautiful — on their huts, as all primitive races of history have done and do even nowadays. In this respect they contrast greatly with the natives of the Congo basin, who have produced since their history began true masterpieces of the fine arts. The treasure of Ife in Nigeria are the best examples (see illustrations page 124). We may therefore say that there is now just barely an awareness of the necessity for a South African Christian art. Art is always the criterion of a culture. If Christianity becomes deeply rooted in South Africa, a genuine African art will develop. Up to now, naturally and understandably, the existing Christian art forms have been derived from European sources. But now is the time when African culture (and this does exist) must be used as the natural basis for the growth of this hoped-for Christian African art.

WHEN I began to teach, I tried first to develop the Bantu students' natural capacity for making useful, beautiful things. I assigned tasks such as designing pots and carving stocks, and I also introduced them to figure work, which often involved a process of de-Europeanization.

As the Bantu tribes are mixed from a racial point of view, I found in the drawings a similarity to Bushmen paintings as well as to Central African work. I also introduced as composition themes subjects with which the students were familiar: herding cattle, mother and child, women washing, men hunting, etc. From the secular objects I led my students on to Christian themes. Quite naturally the African students stressed in their illustration of the Madonna the exalted position of Mary in relation to an earthly mother.

I am not aware of any other attempt in South Africa to establish an indigenous Christian art. To my mind, the Bantu are capable of producing a good Christian art, but its formation is largely dependent on the willingness of the missionary to allow the African to use his own art forms for the decoration of churches.

South African Christian Bantu Art

SISTER PIENTIA SELHORST, C P S

AS THE HEADING suggests, this article is only about South African Bantu art. Everyone familiar with the social structure of South Africa will agree that as yet we cannot speak of a characteristic South African art at all. Art can only develop when there is a fairly well-established social consciousness, though of course this does not mean the exclusion of strife and struggle. Turbulent historical periods have often produced a very vital art. But the individual artist must be strongly conscious of his social "at home." He must know his particular cultural roots. We may say that the different social groups in

South Africa are just beginning to be conscious of their specific cultural inheritance, thereby perhaps following a general trend of world history — national and racial awakening.

The Bantu races of South Africa are more subject to the process of Europeanization than other African tribes, hence the slower development of a genuine art in this area. The growth of a pure Bantu art, such as was produced in the past by the Bushmen, may be impossible in multi-racial South Africa, and the final product may well be the result of an amalgamation of different cultures.

The few still primitive races of South

African Art — for God's Sake

WILLIAM FAGG

THE CHARACTERISTIC qualities of the pagan sculpture of West Africa are, in essence, the same as those called for by a Christian liturgical art for Africa. And a Christian art which would embody those qualities even in part would be infinitely nearer in spirit to the religious art of the age of faith than is the substitute "art" which (in spite of Liturgical Arts) remains in most of our churches throughout the world — and may even be to some extent responsible for the much lamented shallowness of religious conviction in our times.

In this brief essay I shall start with an assumption which I owe to my friend Leon Underwood, one of the finest and — because of his independence of fashionable movements — least adequately recognized of British sculptors, and moreover one of the most profound living students of the philosophy of art. This assumption — and for him it is rather a creed — is that art is not merely a desirable embellishment of religion, but *is* religion; and conversely, religion is art. In other words, there can be no true art unless it is sustained and informed by faith, while a religion which is not made manifest through truly artistic forms fails *as religion*. Over great areas of the Western world, both religion and art have largely ceased to inform our way of life, or even each other, as life becomes more compartmentalized with the advance of materialism; and the presence of religious statues in Catholic and other churches is by no means a refutation or mitigation of this condition, unless they are such as to truly deserve the name of art.

It is not my purpose to examine the spiritual state of Western man; but we must give some thought to the principles underlying liturgical art in general before we try to prescribe for Africa. While I must disclaim all theological competence, it seems to me clear that religious art is always intended to arouse the deepest feelings in the faithful and associate them with the worship of God (or a god); through the work of artists of talent or genius, the ordinary

worshipper is enabled to participate in worship with levels of his being which might otherwise remain unstirred. Every religion hopes to convert, or to retain the allegiance of, the whole man, rather than be satisfied with lip service or an intellectual or self-interested attachment. And indeed a religion normally expresses itself entirely through some form of art — whether architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, or drama. The mass is widely recognized, and not only within the Church, as a great work of art, even without the music which many composers have written for it; and few of us fail to feel a deepening of our religious experience when we visit the great mediaeval cathedrals and abbeys (even if, as in England, they are in ruins or in other hands).

THE CONTINUITY of the religious experience — only a part of which is capable of articulate verbal expression — is perhaps the most precious heritage of human society. It is passed on, chiefly in the family, by means so subtle as to be almost imperceptible, and it is probable that most people who are blessed with this inherited gift of deep faith are hardly aware that they have it, or of what a priceless possession it is. The submerged portion of this faith (as of an iceberg) is perhaps in some ways the most important, if only because it is consciously implanted only with the greatest effort. In my opinion, its great and positive value as a social, moral, and spiritual asset to the individual and to the community is not particularly dependent on the rightness and truth of the religion to which it is devoted; I mean that it is in a sense a kind of powerhouse, a corpus of undirected capacity for faith which can, through the conscious mind, be led in any one of a number of directions. It is an amalgam of many different influences so complex that there is no psychologist competent to disentangle them, but it is clear that it is in part made up of the collective representations of the society — that is, the axiomatic and largely unspoken

beliefs or assumptions which underlie the community's way of life. Undoubtedly it is within this area of the mind or soul that there exist those deep levels which can be called into *rapprochement* with religion through the aesthetic form of its manifestation.

Now it will probably be generally admitted that for most professing Christians in the Western world today this crucial *rapprochement* has been lost, or has never been communicated to them, so that — even in spite of themselves — they do not achieve any real depth of religious experience. This sad condition, this widespread loss of the supporting capacity for faith, is no doubt a function of the revolutionary changes in our civilization during the past century, under the influence of doctrinaire science, atheism, and misplaced scepticism; but also, for a large part of Christendom, the key which sacred art should provide is lost, or in very rusty condition, and this is a function of the separation of art and religion, to the detriment of both. Even where fine religious art is still practiced, many people are incapable of appreciating it except on a "purely" aesthetic basis, so that it is, for them, a key without a lock; "art" meanwhile has gone its own way, and has become intellectualized and commercialized, its umbilical cord (if a further metaphor will be pardoned) severed by the revolutionaries, so that with rare and honorable exceptions it at present has but little to offer to religion.

IF THESE sweeping and summary generalizations are admitted to hold some core of truth, then we may now proceed to examine their implications for the Church in Africa, for *le douloureux problème des arts missionnaires*, as it was called some years ago in the Dominican periodical *L'Art Sacré*.

In the first place, let us note that "pagan" Africans — that is, those who are neither Christian nor Moslem, but adhere to their own tribal religions — certainly appear to have within themselves, in greater measure than do most

modern Europeans, that corpus of accepted and more or less subconscious belief, thoroughly suffused by religious faith and by a religious philosophy adequate to explain for them the whole of the world and of life, which we have referred to in general terms above. It is hardly too much to say that the revolution brought by European civilization, and, it must be said, by Christianity, impinged upon an African age of faith which has undoubtedly lasted several millennia; and though these tribal religions are theologically erroneous, they are for the most part well calculated to uphold tribal morality under supposedly divine sanctions, and moreover are often of great psychological or therapeutic value for the individual.

Such cults are pre-eminent examples of the unity of religion and art, for they are manifested entirely through the forms of music and the dance, architecture, sculpture, and sometimes painting (all these terms being here used in their broadest sense). The European spectator of the pagan rituals carried out during the annual festival in some sacred grove is — provided degeneration has not already set in — forcibly struck by the aesthetic aspect of the event; the African participant, on the other hand, is more likely to take the aesthetics for granted, precisely because art for the tribal African is not something separate or even separable from the rest of his life (as we have succeeded in making it since the Renaissance), but is a function of it, and more especially of religion. The natural instinct with which the Africans fuse their religion and their art (until they learn better from foxes without tails) is, I suggest, strong evidence of the existence of that submerged powerhouse to which I have referred, a continuum of philosophical beliefs, aesthetic and religious attitudes, and moral conceptions, differently composed indeed in each individual, yet in many respects shared by all who subscribe to the ancient tribal values. If I seem to harp too much on this nebulous concept, it is because I am convinced that it is the great unknown quantity which nearly all Europeans ignore, because they cannot see it, in their dealings with Africans.

The arrival of higher or industrial civilization, with a benevolent and powerful government, naturally tends to undermine faith in the old order, if only because the ultimate sanction, in times of dire need such as famine, no longer lies with the old gods. (Perhaps

an unpalatable example from Europe will serve to illustrate this point: the fishermen of Boulogne used to assemble on deck and offer a prayer to Notre Dame de Boulogne for her protection at sea as their trawlers passed her great statue on the end of the mole; when asked some thirty years ago why this custom had fallen into desuetude, they are said to have explained that they now had the radio on board.) The subconscious void which supervenes when profound traditional faiths (religious and philosophical) break down in our society now provides an abundant living for our psychiatrists; and we should not be surprised if detribalization in Africa produces spiritual and social disorders from the same cause.

IF MISSIONARIES are not themselves aware of the identity of true art with religion, it is not surprising that they are uninterested in preserving that identity among their African charges. And in fact Christian missionaries — more especially of the non-Catholic sects —, so far from fostering it, have generally adopted methods of conversion which ensure that art as the African knew it shall play no part at all in their new faith (and nobody, surely, supposes that we have much to offer in its place). The extreme method of presenting paganism as a work of the devil and eradicating every vestige of material objects, practices and attitudes associated in any way with it is comparable in all but its good intentions with the brain-washing characteristic of police-states and of Mau-Mau, and leaves the average convert with a dangerous psychical void thinly overlaid with a new faith communicated chiefly on the plane of reason; and if this should fail, then the last state of that man is worse than the first. It is generally understood among Christian and pagan Africans alike that Christianity and traditional art are incompatible and this is largely responsible for the contempt in which such art is held among most educated Africans.

If the traditional religion and art could themselves be converted to Christianity, by infiltration and reformation, then the deep faith of the African could be engaged. The studies and experiments carried out some years ago by Father Kevin Carroll at Oye in Yorubaland for the Society of African Missions have yielded much of the fundamental research requisite to such improved methods. Of the receptivity of the pagans to the Christian idea of God the

following anecdote may be seen as evidence. In 1950 I went with three fathers from the Catholic Mission at Ora, not very far from Oye, to see the ancient stone figures at Esie, and afterwards we went into the nearby shrine of Shango, the Yoruba god of thunder, where I began to question the young priestess about the cult objects. She took me also for a Catholic priest (my companions being known to her by sight) and answered my questions about the origin of the elaborately worked leather pouch called *laba Shanga* with stolidly evasive replies like "It came from God". Some time earlier I had discovered the fact, previously unknown to ethnologists, that every Shango shrine has to obtain its *laba* at great trouble and expense from the town of Oyo, centre of the cult; when I asked the priestess if this was not its origin, she clapped her hands in a sudden ecstasy of wonder and delight, and exclaimed in Yoruba to my interpreter "He must have been told by God!"

To those who would appreciate the great potentialities for a "converted" liturgical art in this remote part of Yorubaland, I heartily commend H. U. Beier's small book "The Story of Sacred Wood Carvings from One Small Yoruba Town" (Lagos, 1957).

I CANNOT presume to offer advice to missionaries on what I venture to call the principle of conservation of faith; but I am very sure that the conservation of the artistic impulse as the handmaiden of faith can only be good for the wellbeing of Africans and for the propagation in Africa of the true faith. For, in those African communities where art is still practiced or used, in association with traditional cults, I am sure that it provides a readymade way by which first to know and understand the African, and secondly to help him to serve God in a truly Christian and yet wholly African way.

The essential truths of art, as of religion, are not explicable in words, and it is for the communication of the ineffable — the *mysterium fidei* — that the true artist must be something of a priest and the priest an artist.

WILLIAM FAGG is deputy keeper of the Department of Ethnography at the British Museum; editor of MAN, the monthly publication of the Royal Anthropological Institute in London; writer and lecturer on African art; secretary of the Royal Anthropological Institute from 1939-1956; probably the foremost authority on the subject of the traditional art of the African peoples.

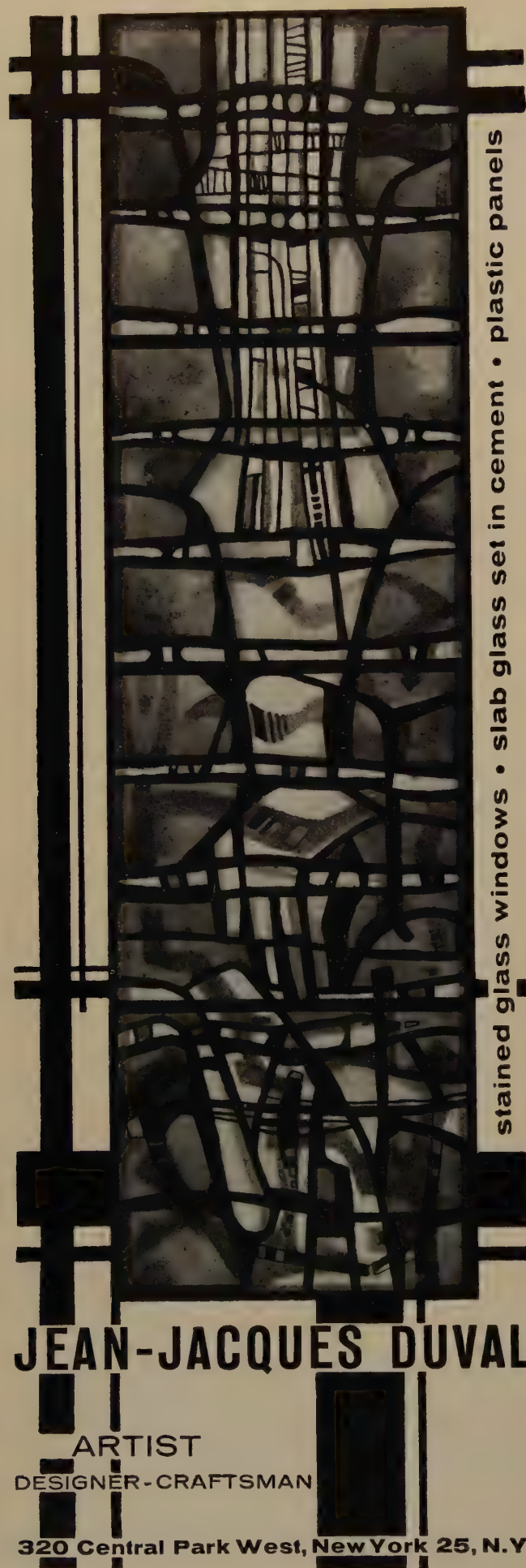
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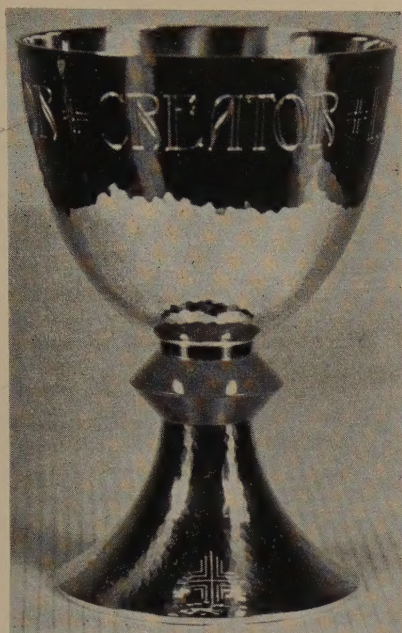
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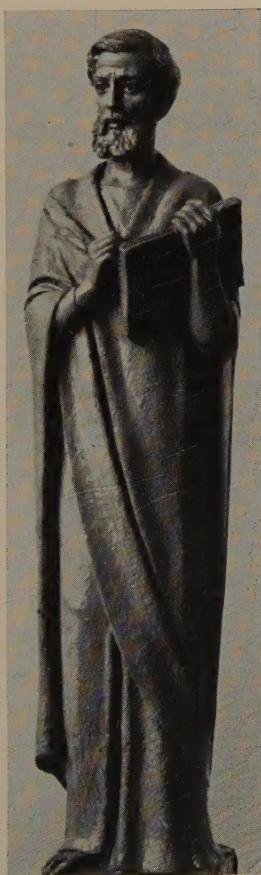
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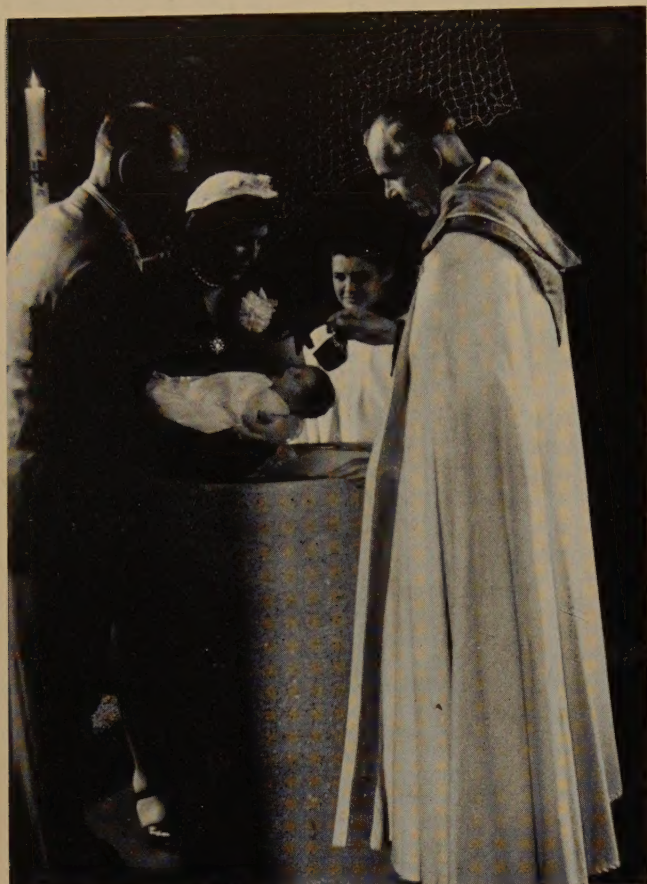
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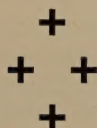
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